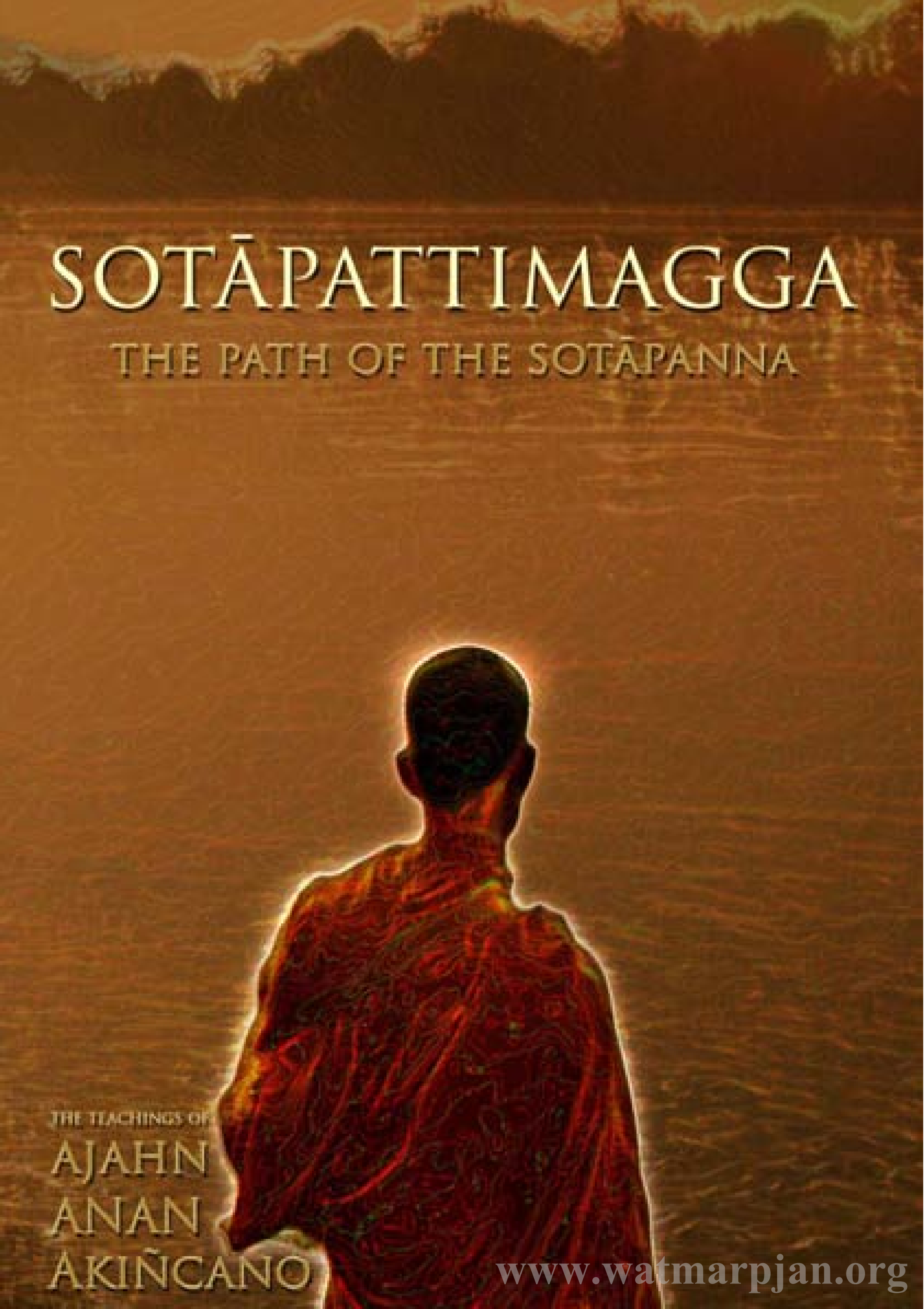
SOTĀPATTIMAGGA

THE PATH OF THE SOTĀPANNA



THE TEACHINGS OF

AJAHN ANAN AKIÑCANO

SOTĀPATTIMAGGA

The Path of the Sotāpanna

Translated from talks given in Thai by

VENERABLE AJAHN ANAN AKIÑCANO

WAT MARP JAN

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SOTĀPANNA: The ‘Stream-Enterer’: One who has entered the stream leading to nibbàna. One who is freed from the first three fetters of self-view, sceptical doubt and attachment to precepts and practices. He has unshakeable faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and is incapable of breaking the five moral precepts. He will be reborn seven times, at the utmost, and not in a state lower than the human realm.

More than any earthly power, More
than all the joys in heaven, More
than rule o’er all the world, Is the
Entrance to the Stream.

Dhammapada 178



Venerable Bodhiñāna Thera (Luang Pu Chah)
1919-1992



Venerable Ajahn Anan Akiñcano

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PART 2

INTRODUCTION BY AJAHN KALYANO

Venerable Ajahn Anan is the abbot of Wat Marp Jan, a forest monastery in Rayong province, Thailand. Having begun practicing meditation as a lay Buddhist in his youth, he entered the monastic Sangha as a monk in 1975 under the guidance of the late Venerable Ajahn Chah (1919-1992), one of Thailand's most well known and highly respected meditation masters.

In 1984, after having developed his personal practice as a close trusted student of Venerable Ajahn Chah for a number of years, Venerable Ajahn Anan was invited to establish a monastery on a piece of forested mountain in Eastern Thailand. From that time until the present day, he has both continued to develop his own practice and with great kindness and patience given up his time and skills to train others in the Buddhist path to liberation.

Venerable Ajahn Anan has not only successfully preserved the spirit of Venerable Ajahn Chah's teachings in a living monastic tradition at Wat Marp Jan, but also has used the unique wisdom and compassion gained through his own inspiring practice to bring the Dhamma to others. He has now become an internationally renowned spiritual guide to hundreds of monks and nuns and thousands of lay practitioners in different Buddhist monasteries throughout Thailand and around the world. The work of translation and editing this book has been carried out by the students of Venerable Ajahn Anan with

deep respect and sincere gratitude for his continued guidance and teachings in the practice of Dhamma-Vinaya, and out of a wish to make his teachings more available to non-Thai practitioners. The Sangha humbly begs forgiveness from the readers for any errors contained in the translation.

Ajahn Kalyano

Abbot

Buddha Bodhivana Monastery

Melbourne, Australia

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Staying close to the Venerable Ajahn and listening to his teachings, one is immediately impressed by how he is able to teach the Dhamma on so many different levels. Throughout each day he will teach people ranging from monastics to laypersons, always using wisdom and the power of his Dhamma to send it straight into the heart of the listener. Though one may not yet be able to understand the Venerable Ajahn's Dhamma with full clarity, his enormous amount of loving- kindness allows one to persevere with patient endurance in the practice. One has confidence that following this path will lead to the highest goal.

This collection of talks was originally given to the monastic community at Wat Marp Jan. As these talks were specifically directed to monastics, they often refer to many of the fundamental practices and routines of monastic life. In addition, one can find details on the higher levels of practice. Though these talks were not originally aimed towards those in the lay life, laypeople dedicated to the practice are sure to find inspiration and benefit nevertheless.

In the English translation,we have attempted to preserve the immediacy of the spoken word and in some cases have opted for fluidity over a strict grammatical rendering. Our hope was to allow the readers a glimpse of the Venerable Ajahn's simple and direct speaking style.

And as it is his style to use Pali words liberally throughout his talks, we have decided to leave them in the translation with footnotes where necessary.

Owing to the relative inexperience in the Dhamma of the translators when compared to their teacher, it is inevitable that there maybe some mistakes contained in this work. The translators apologise for any distortions in the transmission of the Dhamma and accept full responsibilities for these errors.

Throughout these talks Ajahn Anan often refers to the teachings of Luang Pu Chah, his preceptor and teacher. The Venerable Ajahn has great respect for Luang Pu Chah, frequently talking of him with much fondness. We often hear of how Luang Pu Chah taught using various methods—leading by example, using similes, and often methods that went beyond words—all aimed at developing mindfulness and wisdom.

Many of Venerable Ajahn Anan's loyal and dedicated monastic disciples have contributed to the production of this work of Dhamma. May the good results from this work act as an offering to the Triple Gem and to the Ajahn for his generosity and patience.

We hope the wisdom and compassion of Venerable Ajahn Anan, who is like a loving parent and is highly venerated by all his followers, come through in these pages. May the readers find inspiration and deepen their resolve to the practice.

The Translators
Wat Marp Jan
Rayong, Thailand

PART 1



We practice to abandon "having" things or "being" anything at all. We don't practice to "get" or to "be" a sotāpanna, sakadāgāmi, anāgāmi or arahant.

SOTĀPATTIMAGGA:
THE PATH OF THE SOTĀPANNA

With *sati* (mindfulness) firmly established within the sphere of our bodies, our restless thinking and conjuring will diminish and the mind[1] will be at peace. This is *samādhi*[2]. When the mind is quiet, we will clearly know what it's like not to have any mental impressions or hindrances disturbing it. The mind is bright and clear.

When thoughts come into the mind, we will know. With this stilled mind, we can investigate and know all mental impressions: all *nāma* (mind) and *rūpa* (matter) before us as *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anattā* (not self). Then the mind will step away from them all, including the body. This body is merely a body, not a person, me, mine or them.

This knowledge arises from "the one who knows" and it doesn't hold to anything as "mine." This is a mind totally still and free. Although there might be some sense impingement and thoughts passing through, the mind will continue to be still because it has stepped out of the way

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[1]Throughout this collection of talks, as in the Thai usage in general, the words 'heart' and 'mind' are used interchangeably.

[2] *Samādhi:* concentrated or focused awareness. *Samādhi* refers to both the process of focusing awareness unwaveringly upon a single sen*sati*on or mind object and the resultant state of such concentrated attention. *Sammā-samādhi* (Right Concentration) is the 8th Factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

of these mind objects[3]. When we know how to step away from them, then we will truly understand what a quiet mind is like and what a disturbed mind is like.

Sometimes we will notice that even when there is thinking and movement in the mind, or even when we speak, it stays still. Luang Pu Chah would explain it in this simile, “If it’s taken to this level, it’s the same as water. Flowing water we know, still water we know. But what is still, flowing water like? Have you ever seen still, flowing water?”

This is the *sabhava citta*, the mind in its natural state. It has stillness there and all the moods are just flowing by…but the mind doesn’t move. They are two separate things. The mental objects are just the mental objects and the mind is just the mind. They exist separately.

The whole reason we practice meditation is to firstly make the mind settle down and step away from these mental objects. We then do the investigation, separating the mind from the body. The mind will then turn away and be free from clinging to *nāma* or *rūpa*, even if it is only a temporary suppression.

This is the path that leads to *paññā* (wisdom). The one who is walking this path, walks the path of *sotāpattimagga*. This is the path of the *sotāpanna*[4].

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[3] Mind Object (*ārammaṇa*): the object which is presented to the mind at any one moment. As a supporting condition for mental states, this object may be derived externally from the five senses or directly from the mind (feeling, memory, thoughts, or consciousness). In the Thai language it can also refer to an emotional mental state, either good or bad (in that case translated as ‘mood’ or ‘emotion’).

[4] *Sotāpanna*: stream-enterer. Is the first level of enlightenment, which is reached on the

DOUBTS CAN'T ENTER A HEART AT PEACE

When we practice in the way of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* and *paññā*, we will notice that the way of practicing *samādhi* is much harder than merely maintaining *sīla*. This is because we have to abandon all moods that give rise to liking and disliking, anger, ill will, proliferation, agitation, restlessness, doubt and worry.

It can be compared to the body. If the body has five kinds of sickness, it won't find any ease at all and will give rise to discomfort. These five sicknesses become the center of our attention because we can't find any comfort or ease in the midst of the painful feelings throughout. But as time passes, each one of the sicknesses passes away, one by one, and we begin to feel better as we become free of each. Then the body starts to feel at ease. It's the same as this mind.

The *nīvaraṇa*[5] are like the five sicknesses, but afflicting the mind. Whenever one of these hindrances comes upon us, it stops us from experiencing peace and drives us into all sorts of liking and disliking,

abandonment of the first three fetters (of a total of ten), namely *sakkàyadiññhi* (personality view), *vicikicchā*, (sceptical doubt) and *silabbata parāmāsa* (attachment to precepts and practices) which binds beings to worldly existence. The next levels are *sakadāgāmi* (once-returner), *anāgāmi* (non-returner), and the final being *arahant* (fully enlightened one).

[5] *Nīvaraṇa*: hindrances. Five qualities which are obstacles to the mind and blind our mental vision. They are sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and agitation, and sceptical doubt.

drowsiness, restlessness or doubting. Then all we feel is unrest and agitation that leads to doubts about the way of practice.

Sometimes, Luang Pu Chah would talk about these doubts and worries in his Dhamma talks. He would teach that these doubts come for us to investigate, to watch them arise, stay for a while, and pass away. There is no real abiding self, being, me or us in them.

In the course of practice, doubt will arise in many different disguises. The question may arise that, "If I don't have any doubts at all, how am I going to be absolutely certain that I am following the correct mode of practice?" Then we start doubting about our doubts. They will wear on us, grinding us down until we start believing and taking these doubts on. Soon we don't know the way to find any peace at all, and the mind falls further into this darkness of confusion.

The way to cross over this flood of doubts is to firmly keep the *parikamma* (preparatory meditation object) within the heart at all times. Like using "*buddho*[6]." A heart infused with "*buddho*" will always be at peace. Or we may even keep with the recollection of death constantly.

When the mind is calm, desire, anger, delusion, doubts and restlessness aren't anywhere to be found. There is only silence. Then we will know that keeping our *parikamma* always in mind is the correct and direct path of practice.

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[6] *Buddho*: a *parikamma* for the recollection of the Buddha. Frequently used as an initial object for developing concentration.

If we keep our meditation subject firmly within our minds at all times, when we have the opportunity to meditate, the mind will gather easily. We will feel a tranquility that we have never experienced before, because of this sustained *samādhi*. Our minds will have radiance and peace within. A mind that is in this state of quietude will have continuous *sati* stemming from it.

When we investigate the *saṅkhāras*[7]—particularly *rūpa saṅkhāras*, this bodily form or any other external forms in the physical world—we will see that the elements that make up this body exist just as they are. The body is just elements here in their natural state living according to nature. It is only the mind that conjures up and builds these forms to be "something." For instance, we can build up some material object and give it a label, but in reality it is only the four elements that have temporarily come together. They never came up to proclaim that, "I am earth, I am fire, I am air and I am water,'' or even to say that, "I am attractive or unattractive." These concepts are only within our minds. When our eyes, ears and so forth come in contact with sensory objects, it gives rise to these assorted feelings.

When we investigate with *paññā*, we will understand this mental act of labeling and how we impose 'reality' on the outside world. This 'reality' we experience is only conventions we as humans have conjured up. We have built up and created so many of them down to their finest details and various sorts.

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[7] *Saṅkhāra*: conditioned phenomena; that which is created from the coming together of various conditions. Although by definition, *saṅkhāra* includes both physical and mental phenomena, it is usually used in reference to the fourth of the five aggregates, i.e., thoughts, moods and mental states.

But when we throw all of these conventions out and see the underlying reality, we will see that they are just *anicca*, not stable or lasting, *dukkha* and *anattā* , with no true entity behind them. When we contemplate in this way, we call this "giving rise to *paññā*." And it arises right here within our hearts.

All of this comes from our practice of *bhāvanā* (mental development), from a quiet and peaceful heart. We should work to maintain this solace everyday. This is the food and sustenance for the heart. We have enough sustenance to maintain the body already. We have enough of the four requisites[8] to support the needs of this body. We have medicine to cure sicknesses and to prevent various sorts of diseases and to relieve the ones that are already present. The four requisites are something quite important because they are what the body needs. If the body lacks any of the four requisites, it makes life very difficult.

We have a hall to practice *bhāvanā*, sit meditation and to develop merit. Suppose we didn't have this hall, if it was raining or if the sun was beating down, our bodies would experience painful feelings. And now that we have the four requisites for the body, we have to find a refuge for the heart.

[8] Four requisites (*paccaya*): the basic supports of life: food, shelter, clothing and medicine.

REFUGE FOR THE HEART

On some occasions, Luang Pu Chah would ask the monks: "Do you know where the practice really lies or not? Do you know the real place of refuge for the heart already or not?"

Some monks would reply that they knew how to make their hearts calm and how to use *samādhi* to temporarily suppress mental impressions and moods. But they still didn't know how to let go and be completely free of these impressions and moods. We have to really practice and develop our heart. We have to firmly establish an inner refuge within ourselves.

This isn't something beyond the scope of what humans can do. We have already put forth a lot of effort, patience and endurance in our various work and duties; now we have to do the same with our *bhāvanā*, to sustain and succeed in this task we have put before ourselves. We have to endure many ups and downs traveling on the path of *bhāvanā* to develop enough *sati* to supervise and control our mental fluctuations. Even if we only progress a little, this is still the path of *ariyamaggañāṇa*[9], the noble way for our hearts to destroy its main enemy, namely, *dukkha*. I ask everyone to press forward in this way of practice.

[9] *Ariyamaggañāṇa*: the knowledge and realisation of The Noble Eightfold Path.

PRACTICING FOR RELEASE...NIBBĀ NA

When we have an eye that is functional, a visual object and light, the sense of sight will arise. The visual object contacts the sense base and sends the impression straight to the heart. Similarly, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and mental cognition arise differing only in the sense organ and their corresponding object being sensed. If this sense impression comes about at the eye it called *cakkhuviññāṇa*, for the ear its *sota-viññāṇa*, the nose, *ghāna-viññāṇa*, the tongue, *jivhā-viññāṇa*, the body, *kāya-viññāṇa*, and the mind, *manoviññāṇa*. All the six kinds of *viññāṇa*(consciousness) are of the same characteristics. They come about, persist and pass away. But this whole process occurs very quickly.

When the mind grasps at *viññāṇa*, we have the feeling that, "I am seeing" or "I am hearing." We then grasp onto the pleasurable and painful feelings that arises, this is *vedanā*. Then the mind forms ideas, which is *saṅkhāra*, and labels them, becoming *saññā* (memory and perception). This is how the *nāmadhammas* (mental aggregates) function together. It is normal for us to experience the world in this way.

All of our sensory experiences function in this process and the more that we grasp at them, the more that the cycle of pleasure and pain

arises. But the Buddha had us stop and investigate this process by separating out the *khandhas*[10] and the elements with *paññā*. We do this in order to see clearly that this heap of *rūpa* is just comprised of the four great elements. It's *saṅkhata*, something that has formed together and is in a constant state of fluctuation. But it still has to break down and pass away. As for this heap of *nāma* aggregates—*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*—they remain for an even shorter period before they cease.

We must arouse *paññā* in the heart so that it won't go chasing after and carrying around all the things we experience as "mine." It will temporarily leave all the mental impressions alone and not get involved in them. This gives rise to emptiness of self, and just this is *nibbāna*…a fire extinguished and now cool. This is *cessation*, the abandonment of the longing and desire for all mental states—non-clinging.

But if we yearn for *nibbāna* and are continually expecting it, then we will never realise *nibbāna*. Luang Pu Chah would always emphasise that we have to let everything go. The most important thing is to practice towards letting go.

Although we may not let go of all *rūpa* and *nāma* one-hundred percent, because this is the level of the ***arahant*,** at least we will have some understanding and insight into the phenomena of *rūpa* and *nāma*. Depending on the level of our investigation, to a certain extent we can let go in the way we perceive the world. Our suffering will diminish, because we are seeing in accordance with the *saccadhamma*[11].

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[10] *Khandhas*: the five aggregates. The material and mental constituents of experience which are identified with and attached to as one's self: 1. Physical form 2. Feelings 3. Memories and perceptions 4. Thought formations 5. Consciousness.

[11] *Saccadhamma*: the true Dhamma; the true nature of reality.

So why doesn't this wisdom come about regularly? It's because our strength and stability of *samādhi* isn't yet sufficient. *Samādhi* is an unshakableness of the heart. It is a heart that has stability on one object, be it *"buddho,"* *"dhammo,"* *"sangho,"* the in and out breathing, or whatever we choose. *Samādhi* will make the heart gather into stillness, even if only for a short instant, so as to give us the strength to investigate this physical form, the *rūpa*. Can we see that it's unstable? Have we studied it enough to see it clearly or not? This formation is just a natural condition that has the nature to fluctuate and change. There is nothing wrong or irregular with it; actually it can't be any other way. Can we see this yet?

This physical body has pain riddled all through it as a normal condition, has constant change and instability as its nature, has old age as an inseparable part of it, and eventually has to break down and disappear. It's just like this.

We are born into this human realm and have a form again. It has to follow this process. Born like this in every realm; in every life it has to be like this. And it's not just like this for humans—*devatā* s (celestial beings) have *saṅkhāras* as well. They have *rūpa saṅkhāra* but it's called *opapātika*, that is spontaneously born in a fine, material form. Still, their bodies have to break apart the same as ours. They can't just remain for time immemorial, because they are also *saṅkhata-dhātu* (the conditioned element).

But there is also another side of this called *asaṅkhata-dhātu*, the unconditioned element…that is *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is reality. It is something that is there, but we can't locate it in any fixed place or direction. It isn't a destination on any conventional plane, because it's

empty. It is emptiness that can’t be measured in size. This state of emptiness has no defining place, it has no colour, but it’s there. It’s the truth…right here…reality.

Nibbāna is the only thing that is ever *really* here because it’s the only thing that is lasting and permanent. It doesn’t change or fluctuate, because it has no supporting conditions. It isn’t any form of *saṅkhāra*, it is vi*saṅkhāra*[12]. But it’s there, they exist together. When we have *saṅkhāras existing*, vi*saṅkhāra* must also exist alongside. This is reality.

[12] *Visaṅkhāra*: that which is not conditioned and does not change.

OUR BODY WILL RETURN TO ELEMENTS

When we put forth effort in *bhāvanā*, the mind will gather into quietness. This is *samādhi*. We use it to investigate into this pile of *saṅkhāra*: this pile of *rūpa* and this pile of *nāma*. At the beginning we look directly at the *rūpa*: from the head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin and into this whole mass we call a body. Now where does its real essence come from?”

The real essence of the body comes from elements. The food that supports us initially starts out as the earth element. We can see this with trees. The tree absorbs the minerals and moisture from the earth. The sun supports the process of photosynthesis in the green leaves of the tree and through this the tree grows. Eventually it produces flowers and fruits. In the beginning the tree grows and flourishes and finally it produces flowers and fruits. This can provide food and a home to different kinds of animals. It becomes part of the food cycle, supporting life.

Humans rely on animals, plants and fruits to keep their life force going. It’s a cycle that revolves around: it is all reliant on the elements earth, air, water and fire, providing this body *with* earth, air, water and fire, thereby facilitating its further growth.

However, when we misunderstand this simple, natural process and latch onto it, taking this heap of elements to be "me" or "mine," we fail to acknowledge that in the end it will all just pass away. In the end it will start to degenerate and change its form. When the breath comes to its end, this body will start to decompose. The different kinds of bacterias will begin to eat away at it and the body will change colour until the various elements decompose back to their respective elements, all following their natural course. Earth goes back to earth, water back to water, fire to fire, and air to air. All the conditioning factors that have made up this form come to their end.

So when we see that the body comes to its end like this, where is this "me?" In the past we took this body to be ourselves, but now where is this being? Where are all "my" things? Our parents, whom we call "mother" and "father," when their breath has come to its end, where have "they" gone? The heap of elements have broken apart and scattered, earth back to earth, water to water, fire to fire, and air to air.

The truth is just like this. But if we follow after all the worldly conventions, there is still a "me," a "him," a "them." There are still "relations," "brothers," "sisters," "husbands," "wives," "mothers and fathers," "sons and daughters." In truth these things exist, but are just conventions. And if the heart can't see the truth, then it will take on all these conventions as reality—that they are actual and self-existent.

THE PEACEFUL HEART DISCOVERS THE TRUTH

The Buddha discovered the truth; he uncovered that what we consider as reality doesn't exist. It's all empty. There is only arising, existing, and passing away. This is the reality of all phenomena. He saw the *saccadhamma*, or the truth of things right down to its finest details. Dwelling in the bliss of liberation, he felt that it would be impossible for others to follow this path and see its fruits. He thought that because there is nothing more refined and exquisite than *nibbāna*, it would be easier to remain quietly to oneself.

Then the Brahma God who had been closely connected to the Buddha came and requested that the Buddha teach this truth to others. The Buddha first thought of his two former teachers, Uddaka Rāmaputta and Alara Kalāma, but both of them had passed away into formless Brahma realms where such beings lack sense bases, in which they might be able to perceive or hear the teachings. Then he thought of the *pañcavaggiyā* , the five ascetics that had previously waited on him during his days of austere practice. He realised that they were capable of seeing the Dhamma. Venerable Aññā Koṇóañña was the first to attain the eye of Dhamma, with the other four of the group shortly following. They then all successfully reached *arahantship* together. They were able to realise *nibbāna* because they saw that all *rūpa* and *nāma* are merely *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* , that everything is ownerless.

If we have *samādhi* and use its strength to investigate, step by step we will be able to see, see that this body is neither beautiful nor attractive. It's just elements. Have you seen a leaf? Imagine one. It starts out small as a green shoot, then gets greener and bigger. It then gets older, withers, and eventually falls to the ground. All the green is gone and now it's just brown. This brown leaf gradually decomposes. Finally, it changes back to earth.

Our body is just the same as this leaf; the same as a tree, the bark, the heartwood. They all go through changing conditions in this sequence— when the life-force is gone it just decomposes and disappears. In the end, whether it's the hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, or skin, they all follow their natural course of change. The colour changes and they break up. The bones are the same; they go from white to brown. In the end they just end up as the earth element, just as they were originally. Then the perception of "bones" of a "body" disappears and only the earth element remains. When we really pull it apart and analyse it as the earth element, we find that it's just a huge mass of naturally existing elements that have fused together. If we break it down even further, we see that they are just tiny molecules and elements. If we blow them apart we find they are just energy. But in the end they can be separated out until they aren't even there. Only a mass with no real abiding essence, a fusion of energy that eventually dissipates.

It's the same with water. It's just hydrogen and oxygen that have come together. But if we pull these two apart the water isn't there anymore. In the same way, what we call "us" and "our" bodies have no real essence as they will also break apart and disappear. The *rūpa*

saṅkhāras and *nāma saṅkhāras* that are dependent on causes and conditions, simply arise, remain here for awhile, and then fade away.

If the heart is calm in *samādhi*, when we investigate, it will be able to penetrate and see clearly. We can let go of the conventions of a being, person, I, us and them. But if the heart doesn't have this *samādhi*, then we will only see in terms of "me" and self.

So we have to develop the power of *samādhi*. Investigating the body as elements is one method we can use, dividing the body into four parts. Like someone cutting up a cow into four parts. Get in there and investigate every part, bit by bit. The earth element is all the harder parts of the body. The liquid parts that have the characteristic of being fluid and soft is the water element. The air element is basically the breath, and the places where there is warmth is the fire element. All the four elements combine together to fulfill their purpose. Yet in the end when they all break apart and disintegrate we can't find any being, person, I, us or them.

So the feeling that we get that this body is "ours"—where does it come from? It comes from the mind itself, the mind still in ignorance that latches onto everything. We ask ourselves, "How come this body isn't mine? These painful feelings arise and I feel sore here, pain there. If I sit here long it hurts, it might even go numb. So how is it that this feeling isn't mine?"

Well, if these feelings are ours and we have labeled them as ours, before we came to sit here, did we have these feelings? Of course not. We didn't have this pain or discomfort. As we have come now to sit here for a long time our circulation isn't moving around as much, so

these painful feelings arise. And these painful feelings, are they always here? Are they going to soon pass away or not? Of course they will disappear. These feelings are merely coming up, staying here for awhile and then passing away.

We can also question, “Are these feelings the mind? Are they the mind, or just one part of it?” We see that they are just something that has arisen. They aren’t here all the time. The mind remains, but *vedanā* has arisen, will be here for awhile and then disappear. This is the nature of the *vedanā khandha.*

Still, our minds attach to these feelings and drag along all the suffering with it. We don’t yet have enough strength, our *sati* is weak. So we have to get in and practice. We have to get to the stage where *sati* and *samādhi* are firm. We have to sit meditation and do the practice until our hearts are calm. Until they are still. Then we can move into investigation.

Sometimes the heart is calm, sometimes it’s not, but this is just normal. We have to keep pushing forward with patience, putting forth effort to develop our meditation.

GRADUALLY SEEING THE DHAMMA

At the very least we have to keep *sīla*, make merit, develop wholesome qualities and always keep in mind that this opportunity we now have as a human is so precious and rare. We already came to this life with a lot of merit because we have this form, the form of a human. This human form is the perfect vehicle for developing meditation, capable of knowing and seeing the Dhamma.

If we have really seen the Dhamma—that is, we have seen *anicca, dukkha, anattā* clearly—then we see *nibbāna*. We see emptiness and know that it really exists.

In the past we took this form to be ourselves—that this is *attā* (self)— but when we see the body as *anattā* , see that it's all *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* , we will experience emptiness. We will realise that everything in the world is in essence empty. There are no real permanent entities, only parts that have come together and have arisen dependent on conditions…*anattā* . The entire universe is totally empty. Its whole substance is emptiness.

If our contemplation brings us to the point where we have insight into this emptiness, this shows that on one level we understand the true nature of existence.

Although sometimes there will be happiness and suffering present, our *sati* will be right there with it. Lady Visakhā experienced this state (of *sotapānna*) as well and understood that this was the nature of all phenomena, but didn't know it in its entirety. There was still *upādāna*[13] there. There was still some *upādāna* towards *rūpa*, still some towards *nāma* that remained. But the grosser *kilesas*[14] had been abandoned. Anger, delusion and forms of liking and greed at the grosser levels had been diminished decisively. But the more refined *kilesa* hadn't been completely abandoned, there were still some there.

We must continue with the practice, constantly investigating *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* anew until we can abandon these *kilesas* completely. Again we have to strive to develop our *samādhi* and investigation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* to the final level so as to abandon the most refined *kilesas* once and for all. At this point birth and becoming will be extinguished.

Once the grosser *kilesas* have been abandoned, with the ending of this life there is no chance of being reborn into the lower realms, the disastrous states of the hell or animal realms. We won't fall. We can only be reborn into human or heavenly realms. This is the state where the grosser *kilesas* have been abandoned but there is still some *upādāna*. We have to keep probing. Sometimes there will be elation, other times depression, simply take a look at it, it's normal for this to occur. When we have been born as humans and have come in contact

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[13] *Upādāna*: clinging. The four kinds of clinging are clinging to sensuality, clinging to views, clinging to precepts and practices, and clinging to the notion of self or soul.

[14] *Kilesas*: defilements. Unwholesome mental qualities that defile or afflict the mind. Includes: greed, hate, delusion, conceit, wrong view, sceptical doubt, sloth and torpor, restlessness, shamelessness, lack of moral dread.

with the *buddhasāsana*[15], we are fortunate enough to have the teachings on the way that leads us out of this cycle of birth and death. We can follow this path of Dhamma that won't lead us further into the cycle of birth and death, but will lead us instead to *nibbāna*.

We have to develop goodness, *dāna* (generosity), *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* constantly until we know the Dhamma, see the Dhamma and understand the Dhamma completely.

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[15] *Buddhasāsana*: The Buddha's dispen*sati*on; the Buddhist religion; Buddhism.

THE WAY OF PRACTICE THAT IS NEVER WRONG

Having restraint and using caution with regards to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind: Luang Pu Chah would emphasise that this is the mode of practice that is never wrong. This is the path that will lead to the seeing of Dhamma. We have to have *sati* to investigate at this point and watch the feelings that arise. Not letting ourselves wander off but watching right in the present moment—Luang Pu Chah would point this out very clearly.

One day I was walking *caṅkama*[16] in the evening and I was wondering to myself, "What's really the correct way of practice? What is the thing that will lead me to understand the Dhamma? I really want to know clearly this path of practice so that I will be able to follow it with wholehearted efforts, mindfulness and wisdom."

Shortly afterwards, Luang Pu Chah gave a *desanā*[17] explaining the way of practice that is never wrong. He talked on restraint regarding the six *indriyas*[18]: eye seeing forms, ear hearing sounds, nose smelling odours, tongue tasting flavours, the body coming into contact with various sen*sati*ons, and the mind experiencing mental phenomena. He said not to be delighted or averse. We have to catch these various

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[16] *Caṅkama*: walking meditation.
[17] *Desanā*: a talk or sermon on the theory and practice of the Buddhist path.
[18] *Indriya:* faculties – here referring to the six sense bases.

mental reactions. The way of not being caught into liking or disliking is the Middle Way. This is the direct path that will lead us to the understanding of Dhamma. Practice in this way.

Sometimes in the course of practice, our minds haven't got enough strength. We are experiencing only a little peace and still having various doubts. But we have to keep putting forth effort in the way that we experienced calm in the past, using the *kammaṭṭhāna*[19] that we are proficient with. We can use *maraṇānussati* (death reflection), *ānāpānasati*[20], *asubha*[21], *buddhānussati* (recollection of the Buddha), or developing *mettā* (loving-kindness) and the *brahmavihāras*[22]. These are what we need to pursue and develop. Pursue whichever *kammaṭṭhāna* that we are strong in.

The things that we aren't strong in, sometimes we also have to do. Suppose we are finding delight in form. Well, what are we going to do? We have to directly confront and pass through it by countering it with its opposite. See it as *asubha*. Keep mindfulness along with it at all times. If mindfulness is there continuously it will carefully watch over the heart and keep it in check.

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[19] *Kammaṭṭhāna*: literally means a 'basis for action.' It usually refers to the subject or method of meditation (traditionally a list of forty mentioned within the *Visuddhimagga*). It can also be used more generally to mean the whole way of training in *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

[20] *Ānāpānasati*: mindfulness of breathing; the meditation method of being aware of the sen*sati*on of breathing

[21] *Asubha*: literally 'the unbeautiful'. A meditation subject on the impurity, loathsomeness and foulness of the body. This often refers to contemplation of the 32 parts of the body or the 10 cemetery contemplations.

[22] *Brahmavihāras*: the four sublime abidings: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

Keeping our heart in a good state is really important—we must continuously watch over our hearts. Luang Pu Chah would often emphasise this, that the one that watches over his heart will escape from *Māra's*[23] trap.

So how do we see the Dhamma? He would say, "We don't have to do too much. Just like getting people to come see what's inside this *sālā* (meditation hall): once we find the technique to get them in here, they will see for themselves."

He said to do whatever it takes to get the mind focused on the body. When you get it in here the mind will see for itself: what it's like inside, what it's like outside. So find a method to keep the *sati* right here at this point, or simply watch the in and out breath. Right here is the path that will lead to the understanding and seeing of Dhamma. Walk this way, practice this way—train in *sīla*, train in *samādhi*, train in *paññā*. Right here, this is how we will see clearly.

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[23] *Māra:* the Evil One. Can appear as a deity or as the personification of the negative emotional and psychological forces that oppose spiritual development.

SAÑÑĀ -VIPASSANĀ OR PAÑÑĀ -VIPASSANĀ ? MEMORY-INSIGHT OR WISDOM-INSIGHT?

Sometimes *paññā* can arise through merely hearing or listening to the teachings. This understanding may penetrate clearly, even up to the point of seeing through all conventions and experiencing a glimpse of liberation. If we have enough *paramī*[24] and strength of mind this understanding can arise. But afterwards we still have to keep on with the practice, keep bringing the mind back to stillness again. This we can't let up on or stop.

We need to use the power of *sati* to keep the mind focusing on all the different forms of *rūpa* and *nāma*. If we force it too much though, it will give rise to stress and agitation. It will feel like our *sati* has been shattered and the mind won't gather into peace. So we have to relax a little and come back to the present moment.

Sometimes we overestimate ourselves and think we have developed enough *paññā* and see clearly already. We think that *nāma* and *rūpa* are the way *we* understand it. But we are just looking at *nāma* and *rūpa* with *vipassanā*[25] in the way someone else has explained it, so it's really only our *saññā*. It's just something we have memorised,

[24] *Paramī*: the ten spiritual perfections: generosity, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. Commonly in Thai it can refer to an individual's accumulation of spiritual qualities and merits.
[25] *Vipassanā*: literally 'clear-seeing.' Referring to insight and the methods of contemplation or investigation that lead to profound knowledge.

"*Nāma* is like this, *rūpa* is like that." Though we think that this is true *vipassanā*, it isn't. Yet similar to a child, we have to learn like this first. Later, when we have the steadiness and stillness of *samādhi* there, this is when clear *paññā* will arise, arising through *bhāvanā*. We will see the heart clearly for the first time.

Maybe we will experience either *nāma* or *rūpa* with an understanding that, "this isn't really mine." But this is only a small preliminary step; the power of *samādhi* is still weak. The insight arises in a flash and it penetrates only for a moment. After that it's like we have totally forgotten it. Because the power of our *samādhi* isn't yet enough to really see clearly, insight and clarity won't arise and the *paññā* arising from our *vipassanā* will be hazy and clouded. This momentary clarity and insight we had is still a level of *paññā*, but it has only come about through our hearing the teachings and pondering over them. We take these teachings, investigate and contemplate them, and experience a level of understanding. In this manner *paññā* develops the mind which begins to gather in *samādhi*.

As we keep developing the power of our *samādhi* further, its strength will increase and our insight and understanding will arise anew. This is true *paññā*, *paññā* that comes from *bhāvanā*.

In the method of *paññā* developing *samādhi*, at the start we are still on the level of thinking, the activity of *vitakka*[26] and *vicāra*[27]. We first rely on this faculty of thinking and then from here it proceeds to break into different levels of *samādhi*.

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[26] *Vitakka*: initial application of mind, i.e., the act of applying or 'lifting' awareness onto a meditation object.

[27] *Vicāra:* sustained application of mind, i.e., the act of continued focus upon a meditation object.

If our *paramī* isn't full, the clarity of understanding that we gained from our practice will deteriorate, and if we don't hear the teachings it will disappear completely. But then when we hear them again the clarity arises again. This is *paññā* that is supported through hearing the teachings.

If we ponder and consider these teachings on the level of *saññā*, our clarity will increase and our minds will find a bit more stillness. What is this kind of stillness? The stillness that is only here for a moment is called *khaṇika samādhi*. There is some clarity, but only temporarily. Its power cannot be sustained and it disappears. If we investigate anew, it will arise anew. Maybe in a day we investigate ten, twenty times and some clarity will arise briefly at those times. But this clarity can't compete with the further levels because it only arises through the power of our thinking.

But if we practice in this same way, and our *paramī* is fuller, we will enter the level of *upacāra samādhi*. This *samādhi* is sustained for longer and its power is increased. From here we can enter into *apannā samādhi* where clarity is greatly increased. Sometimes we don't even have to investigate a lot, maybe only once a day, but with the power of this *samādhi* there is energy to sustain the understanding for a long time.

If there isn't this power there then we have to investigate often, contemplate a lot. Through our investigating, calm arises for a moment, but it will disappear. Sometimes it happens that our mind gathers into the calm of *upacāra samādhi* while we are sitting, but when we open our eyes it instantly disappears. It's like we never had any *samādhi* to begin with. This is normal.

This *samādhi* is still at the stage where it increases and diminishes. It isn't firm and consistent. It doesn't remain for long and various moods will often possess it. Though we are only doing a small amount of investigation, it is a good start as the mind has been carefully maintained up until this point. It has started to brighten and has found somewhat of a refuge.

SAKKĀYA-DIṬṬHI: PERSONALITY VIEW

Luang Pu Chah would say *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* is like a hollow wicker ball and our hearts are encircled tightly within. This ball has many layers; it has been woven with six or seven strands.

When we investigate once, we have brightness and clarity arise. But once the power of our mindfulness and insight weakens the *nīvaraṇa* overtake us and darkness enfolds us. *Upādāna* once again comes. Though when we investigate again, the brightness returns.

When we talk about the brightness of the heart, it isn't yet a complete and enveloping brightness. It's still only partial, perhaps just a small crack of light within our hearts that appears just for an instant. But we have to keep at it, keep following this path that will cleanse and clean out our hearts.

When we are investigating, practicing and thinking in this way, the investigation will start to yield some results, and step by step the mind will gradually get brighter. Bit by bit, bit by bit. It's not completely bright, because the power of our *samādhi* isn't full, so step by step keep pursuing and persevering. Moving from momentary *khaṇika samādhi* to *upacāra samādhi*, the mind will experience a radiance and brightness like never before. The darkness of the hindrances that arise with external senseb contact will diminish.All the outer

impingements will drop away and we will be left with just the inner experience of the mind. Once the mind has gathered into a state of calm and investigated the truth it is capable of destroying the anusaya*kilesa*[28].

This is the path of making the mind peaceful and then investigating the body. Luang Pu Chah would emphasise the importance of this. When the mind has attained calm, investigate the body from whatever level of calm we have. Do it this way. Investigate all the *saṅkhāras* of this physical form in the light of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* , going over them again and again. Investigate in just this way. Luang Pu Chah laid down and stressed this foundation of practice. We all have great faith and respect for Luang Pu Chah already, certain that he reached the goal of *arahantship*. And what path did he teach? Just this path. He taught us to walk this path.

Our results depend on our accumulated *paramī*; whether we proceed fast or slow it's up to our *paramī* to determine the outcome. It's something we can't really control. Just like planting a tree: we water it, tend to the soil, add fertiliser, and keep the insects away. That's our responsibility. The fruits that will appear are the responsibility of the tree. When the proper time comes the tree will give off flowers or fruit. Luang Pu Chah would speak like this regularly.

We have to ward off the urge to want results quickly, to want to see the Dhamma right now, to achieve it fast. This is common for most meditators, but we have to do our best to avoid this.

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[28] *Anusaya*: the 7 underlying tendencies of sensual desire, aversion, views, doubt, conceit, craving for becoming and ignorance.

In the beginning I also wanted results quickly. I wanted to know which way to practice so that I could obtain results quickly. Luang Pu Chah never said that there was any way quicker than this. He said to walk this path, to watch over the heart with *sati*. Watch over our feelings right at this point, abandoning thoughts of liking and disliking.

How are we going to do this? Don't get elated, don't get aggravated. Do just this much. If we have liking and disliking what are we going to do? This is where the practice really lies. If liking and disliking arises and we can't seem to fix these emotions ourselves, then we must return to the books that explain the way of practice. We must listen to Dhamma tapes or talk with fellow practitioners to find some fresh ways and means to deal with these problems.

But these are still only outer refuges because we don't yet clearly know how to contemplate to cure the mental darkness and defiling emotions. The defilements are really stubborn. It's like having a glass filled with water but with scum around the rim. In the beginning the water is clear and we can see the bottom, but later it gets covered over in scum. In the same way if we don't develop *paññā*, the scum and darkness of the defiling emotions will take over and engulf us.

When I was with my Kruba Ajahn[29], we would only hear a Dhamma talk once every fifteen days. For a while after that the heart would be luminous, but by the tenth day all the darkness and stubborn defilements had returned. It's like we can't even see the path at all, it seems engulfed in darkness.

[29] Kruba Ajahn: a term used in Thailand to denote a senior teacher in the forest tradition.

So what do we do when we can't see the path? We might feel that sometimes we see the path clearly, but later on it gradually fades away because our strength is still weak. We still depend on hearing the Dhamma to encourage and stimulate ourselves to practice, until we can understand the essential principles emphasised and can motivate ourselves. We have to stick with the *kammaṭṭhāna* we have chosen and do it a lot. Investigate a lot, working right at this point—right at the point of liking and disliking.

Some people say that they find the practice of *samādhi* very difficult. We have to take a look at the *kammaṭṭhāna* being used. Maybe we can contemplate the body or use the corpse reflections. We have to watch the mind. Watch the arising and passing away of all the various emotions. Watch over *vedanā* with *sati*. We have to have *sati* watching over the mind. This is the point where we need to focus to see clearly.

FALSELY ASSUMING THE FRUITS OF SOTĀ PANNA

We have to keep on guard. Sometimes when the mind is luminous and bright we think we see it all totally clearly. Maybe we will think, "Hey, now I am a *sotāpanna*! I've been watching over the mind and I'm free of sensual craving and there are only minimal thoughts arising."

There are some centres where the students go to ask about their meditation and the teacher will approve, saying, "The mind in this state has reached the level of *sakadāgāmi*." There are a lot of these places.

There was once a layman who was practicing in the forest tradition. When he meditated he couldn't get any peace at all. So he went and visited another teacher who taught, instructed and guided him in the practice. At first this man couldn't even sit still for one hour, but when he went and sat with this other teacher he could sit six or seven hours, maybe even all night.

After that, this layman was pleased with the results and went to consult this teacher who declared that the layman had seen the Dhamma. From then on he thought he was an *ariya-puggala*[30]. He couldn't restrain

[30] *Ariya-puggala*: literally 'Noble Person.' Referring to one who has attained one of the eight stages of Enlightenment.

himself from boasting about it. Wherever he went he would loudly broadcast to others that he knew and saw, that he had the Dhamma firmly in his heart. But it was merely on the level of *saññā* (memory).

Later this man, with the help of one of Luang Pu Mun's[31] disciples, was able to correct this view and backed off from his position. With a view that has become firmly ingrained, it's hard to straighten out. It's hard, but it's not beyond the capacity of some teachers.

This is the very reason Luang Pu Chah would never answer any questions like this and say, "This monk is at this level, this monk is at that level." He would never say what level of attainment someone had achieved. He would always teach about those things with wisdom. He would say that it's *paccattaṁ*—one knows and experiences for oneself.

Sometimes Luang Pu Chah would teach using similes. Some monks would say, "This monk is an *arahant*, he's this and that, he has no sexual craving and he has no more wanting or liking for anything." Then they would go and ask Luang Pu Chah. He would say, "If a frog stays down in a hole for many months, does that make it an *arahant*? Is it really an *arahant* now?" That's how he would answer, enabling us to contemplate and understand the matter clearly.

It's wrong to jump to conclusions when special experiences arise from the practice and we label and interpret them as an attainment of one level or another. This is the reason a lot of delusion arises. In some monasteries there are many "*sotāpanna*s" and "*sakadāgāmi*s," but as time passes they all seem to disappear. We see this in some places.

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[31] Luang Pu Mun (1870-1949): considered to have revived the forest tradition in Thailand. Teacher to Luang Pu Chah and many other forest meditation masters.

But in our Wat Nong Pah Pong[32] lineage, those who have practiced well don't talk about levels of achievement, because those that have achieved know for themselves. They understand the various ways and methods of practice. Luang Pu Chah emphasised this a lot.

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[32] The original forest monastery founded by Luang Pu Chah, which now has many branch monasteries in Thailand and around the world.

WHEN CALM ARISES, INVESTIGATE THE BODY

Sometimes we may think, "Ohhh, why is it that everyone around me seems so sure of themselves and free of doubts, but I'm filled with them?" It's because though our wanting to see the Dhamma has come about through a lot of listening and studying which is a form of wisdom, it causes us to expect certain results. It's a constant struggle that gives rise to restlessness. We want so much to achieve.

Luang Pu Chah would say to put it aside for now. Just leave it alone at this point. It's just like a glass filled with water: we have to pour the water out before we can put drinking water in. If the glass is filled with water already, the drinking water can't go in, it will overflow. In the same way, if we think we know everything then the Dhamma can't enter our heart. So at first we need to reduce *diṭṭhimāna* (conceited opinion). This is really important in the way of practice Luang Pu Chah taught.

Luang Pu Chah's style was to lead by example and to do as he taught. Sometimes we might be careless and think critically of him, letting our sense of self come up in the mind. But when we continue the practice we would admit, "Who am I to criticise him? I can't keep up with him."

Maybe we have good *samādhi*. In those days when my *samādhi* was good, *pīti* would arise. I could get to *upacāra samādhi*. My mind was cool and at ease; no mental disturbances would enter. Entering states of calm was really easy. I thought, "There's no need to investigate the body, I'll go straight to the mind." I didn't want to contemplate the body, I just wanted to go straight to the mind, straight to the Dhamma.

So I went and saw Luang Pu Chah. He quickly pointed out to me, "Right now are you peaceful?" Right then I was nervous and trembling because I was with Luang Pu Chah. The peace the heart previously had before totally vanished and I couldn't even pull myself together. I was flooded with delusion. Then this delusion answered that, yes, I was calm. But all it was doing was taking the state I experienced one hour ago and using that as an answer. Looking back at it I wasn't in the present moment at all; I just took a previous state and brought it up as an answer.

But Luang Pu Chah knew that this was just delusion talking. He said to go back and keep investigating the body over and over. This really stuck in my mind. Keep investigating the body, right here in this physical mass of *saṅkhāras*.

Still I thought, "Hmm, why does Luang Pu Chah keep having me investigate this body when my mind is so calm? All I want to do is delve into this mind." I wanted the fast track to *nibbāna*. But later, the deeper levels of *samādhi* that I had been experiencing subsided. That's how it goes, down, down, down, until it's like we have no *samādhi* at all. We have to go back and carefully tend to the mind anew. We have to re-establish *samādhi* in the heart.

And this is really hard. It's a real struggle, step by step, inch by inch. Contemplating death, walking *caṅkama*, sitting in meditation, keeping the mind with the *parikamma* as much as possible. Slowly but surely it gets better, step by step. And when it gets better, it's better than before. There's more power and *sati-paññā* than there was before.

Getting in and investigating the body as *asubha*, as filthy, seeing the body as more and more unattractive, the heart experiences greater levels of *pīti*. As we see the unattractiveness of the body, the heart goes into deeper levels of happiness. The more we see the body as unattractive, the greater the peace becomes. It functions back and forth like this.

If in the past we saw this body as attractive, its outer appearance as beautiful, then the heart wasn't radiant, it was engulfed in darkness and overrun with *kilesas*. But if we see the body as something not beautiful, then the heart becomes beautiful. It becomes bright and luminous, because it sees the truth. It's as if the heart flips over and experiences true peace. It becomes calm and still.

Investigate hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin. When they are refined and broken down we can see them as elements. Just elements, earth, water, fire and air. Separate the whole mass out and analyse them as *anattā* . If we pull them all apart and see them as *anattā* , then the heart comes to peace.

Back and forth. Back and forth. Pursue it to the end and try to find a self. Separate all the elements and see them as they really are. Understand and know what these elements are like. Take a look inside.

Where is the earth? Where is the water? Where is the fire? Where is the air? Really look closely.

In and out, back and forth, round and round. Split, divide and analyse them from the angle that they are just elements. Here's the earth, here's the water, here's the fire, here's the air. Investigate down inwards…what's in this body? Poke and prod at it right here. Pick it up and analyse one part.

Today just focus on the water element. What is the water element like in this body? Investigate just this one part. "Is this water a person or self?" Review and reflect upon it like this. Water is just water isn't it? Is the water outside us a person or self? So why is the water inside this body a person or self then? How is that so? Is it really a being or person? Investigate this thoroughly and clearly. Bile, phlegm, pus, blood, spit, grease, urine. Investigate them one by one, closely, back and forth all through the water element until we see the whole mass joined together as *anattā* . Our heart will become at ease, like a weight has been lifted, because we have seen the truth.

We keep on investigating, looking at it over and over again, until we feel that its intensity has faded and become flat, until the investigation becomes stale. Then investigate another part of the water element. Change it around often and bring it back to the start and go again.

Investigate the earth element as well, the hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin. What are they like? What does the earth element appear like? How does it change appearances? In the end, what does it end up like, where does it go to and where does it come from? Why is it in this state now? In the past was it the same? Investigate back

and forth, over and over, until it falls apart and is reduced to its original state.

The food that we consume is just elements as well. How does it enhance and supplement us? Look at it—the earth adds to the earth, water adds to the water, fire to fire, wind to wind.

Investigate right at earth, water, fire and air, right here, this mass of four elements. Over and over, in and out, right down to the finest details, and then build them up again in fine detail. Do this for clear seeing and understanding. This is wisdom that comes about through investigation.

THE GOTRABHŪ-CITTA[33]: CHANGE OF LINEAGE

So our *samādhi*, where is it at? If our investigation leads us to *khaṇika samādhi*, it still means we only have a little strength. But if we keep investigating in this way, bringing about more calm, it can lead us to *apannā samādhi* where the mind really becomes still.

When we come out of *apannā samādhi*, we don't have to teach or tell it what to do. This still mind will stare straight at whatever arises, and whatever mental images it focuses on will be known immediately and clearly. We will have full confidence in this knowing.

At this stage we focus the still mind and point it at an object, for example, the hair of the head. At this level we look straight at the hair of the head and, "Bang!" we will know clearly that it isn't ours. Knowledge arises with great clarity that the mind and body are two totally separate phenomena.

At this time the heart is about to transcend the world, it becomes a *gotrabhū-citta*. If through our investigation the mind goes into this state, it becomes easier to further train and guide it. It depends on its own power, the power of the mind.

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[33] *Gotrabhū-citta*: in the Abhidhamma this is referred to as a maturity moment where one enters the lineage of the Noble Ones (becomes a *sotāpanna*).

If we keep progressing and see the mind with further clarity, then it will move into its own level of stillness without prior prompting. We don't have to tell the mind to investigate. It will work on its own, watching mental images arise and disappear by themselves. *Asubha* images appear by themselves. If the mind is really still, this is what will happen.

We don't have to force the mind in order for it to investigate whatever sort of Dhamma theme. This calm mind will go straight to the correct theme. It will move into investigation on its own accord. It's like it's on autopilot, automatically investigating. This state will come about of its own accord.

If we strive and put forth effort in this way, we keep ourselves awake and alert. But we have to notice if we are putting forth this effort and no calm is arising. We may even be close to proliferation…Dhamma proliferating. If we have been "investigating" but our minds haven't gathered into any calm, it's basically just proliferating in the way of Dhamma. We really have to be careful with this.

If it's just Dhamma proliferation, we can give a discourse all night. We can preach our "Dhamma" from the start of the night right through to when the sun rises the next day. Some monks do it like this. They can speak and keep on going on for four, five, six hours. But when their own moods and problems arise, they can't fix them at all. They can't correct their thinking because their *paññā* can't keep up with it. This is because it is only the *paññā* of memory, of our own thinking. They can't keep up with their moods, and when they can't keep up with these moods they become distressed.

So we have to step back and take hold of the situation, bringing our mind back to whatever meditation object we use to attain calm. Sometimes we may think we should only investigate, but sometimes we have to rely on the calm that we attain from *samādhi* practice. *Ānāpānasati*, is a foundation stone of the meditation practice. We can count the breath in pairs, use *"buddho"* along with it, or simply watch the in and out breaths. We have to use whatever methods and skilful means we have that bring us calm and stillness.

This is the way the Kruba Ajahns taught and the way they instructed. They taught that when the eye sees forms, ear hears sounds, nose smells odours, tongue tastes flavours, body comes in contact with sensations, and the mind with mental objects, then to notice whatever arises. The objects that arise in the mind are called *dhammā ārammaṇas*, thoughts and moods, sometimes wholesome, sometimes unwholesome.

The mind grasps at these things as being 'mine' and 'myself,' but the Kruba Ajahns tell us, "No, they're not ourself, take this kind of thinking and throw it out!" This thinking which is bound with clinging is *kilesa*. We are just clinging to our own thoughts and sense of self and this gives rise to *kilesa*.

But just thinking isn't *kilesas*—when we grasp at it, *that's kilesas*. Just like the skin of a fruit: if we don't need or can't use it, throw it out. Like fish bones, what use are they? We only eat the meat—throw them out.

The Kruba Ajahns taught that these defiled thoughts and emotions are something to be thrown out, something with no inherent core or

meaning. Their teachings are entirely for the purpose of letting them go.

PART 2



The way of not being caught into liking or disliking is the Middle Way.
Luang Pu Chah never said that there was any way quicker than this.
He said to walk this path. Practice in this way...just do it.

WHEN THE MIND FINDS STRENGTH

Throughout my first, second and third rains retreat, the level of calm in the mind progressed steadily. As each year ended I was able to look back on it and notice that the level of calm had increased. My mind was at ease, totally cool, like being in air conditioning. So cool and so wonderful. This gradually progressed year by year and by my fourth rains retreat the practice really came together. The mind and body felt so cool that I would shiver. If I met with cold weather, I would feel even colder. My bodily elements couldn't adjust to this change. There would just be this continuous feeling of coolness.

Some people instead experience heat that pervades the body, but the calm is there. It depends on our own bodily elements. The experience of calm and peace in the heart will manifest accordingly with whatever element is predominant. But this peace can still deteriorate and disappear because it is subject to *anicca, dukkha, anattā* . When this happens we have to keep investigating and meditating anew until the heart becomes calm again.

After we re-attain calm within the heart, the practice starts to get even better. It's like the mind has more strength and meditation starts to get more fun. However, when there are sensory impingements coming in, if we can't contemplate them clearly then it becomes too much

suffering to bear, severe suffering in the heart. Although we want to overcome these moods we just can’t. Doubts and uncertainty spin back and forth. We want to be back on the right path, regaining clarity.

Luang Pu Chah would stress not to worry about it. Leave the doubts alone; they are just a hindrance. When there is no calm everything seems a mess. The doubts spin round and round and we feel way off the path and can’t seem to get back on. We wonder “where to go?” but every direction seems to lead only to dead ends. Everything seems dark and hopeless and we can’t get around it.

We just paralyse ourselves and the mind spins around and round, in and out and the doubts drag us down and then come all again anew. Again liking, again disliking. But if we keep at the practice without stopping, it must progress. The practice will move us forward.

Later, when we have come to the point where the power of the mind, the power of *samādhi*, and the power of investigation are strong and effective, this is where the practice becomes smooth. Whenever we investigate there is calm. We don’t have to tell the mind what to do; at this stage it knows the path to proceed. At this point, investigation will proceed smoothly by itself, and proceed in the correct way as well. The practice has momentum and there is no doubting, so we start to understand the Dhamma clearly.

So to get to this, how do we practice, what do we do? In the start we have to watch the fundamental things. If we’re eating too much, know that this is *kilesa*, a basic one. Then watch the mind. This thinking, proliferation and restlessness, we can’t make it stop instantly. So we

need to keep trying and keeping at it, performing whatever duties we need to perform while keeping up our investigation.

As monks, investigation of Dhamma is our primary duty. *Kesā* (hair of the head), *lomā* (hair of the body), *nakhā* (nails), *dantā* (teeth), *taco*(skin): these are the five *kammaṭṭhāna* which we need to develop, investigating and contemplating them backwards and forwards. Luang Pu Chah would usually teach the way to abandon attachment to the body during the ordination ceremony for new monks. He wouldn't talk about body contemplation so much in his general teachings, but when talking about his personal practice, he recounted how he would visualise other monks and novices as corpses and ghosts as they walked ahead of him on alms round, or else he would visualise himself as a decomposed corpse. His own strength of mind had already developed to the point where he could contemplate the body fluently in this way.

The work of investigation is just like this. If the mind is calm and still, we can understand many things with a greater clarity and understanding. But if this calm isn't yet there, we will just be flooded with doubts and uncertainty. In the beginning we must investigate anew, bit by bit, developing this strength within the mind.

THE WAY OF PRACTICE:
GO AGAINST YOUR HEART'S DESIRES

When I was staying and learning from Luang Pu Chah, all his ways of instructing and training were aimed at grinding down our defilements, going against our wants. This is a really important aspect of the practice, not just always following our desires

In the past at Wat Nong Pah Pong when it was time for the Rains Retreat, sometimes monks and novices would volunteer to go off to a branch monastery, but sometimes no one would volunteer to go. So Luang Pu Chah would just send people away. Sometimes it suited them, other times not. Some monks after they had been sent off would come back later saying "Ohhh, why did he send us to this place? It was terrible! Why has he put me through this?"

We have to rely on using *khanti*, patient endurance, as a foundation of the practice. With patient endurance, we can consider and investigate until we can resolve the negative feelings that arise. This is an important quality in the training and practice, together with having respect and reverence for each other. This is where the practice starts to grow from. In Luang Pu Chah's way of teaching and instructions he would also emphasise *indriya-saṁvara-sīla* (restraint of the senses), *jāgariyānuyoga* (devotion to wakefulness), *bhojane mattaññutā* (moderation in eating), and contentment with the four requisites. This is the foundation of the practice. Keep right with these.

Whether our progress is fast or slow, it's up to our spiritual maturity and accumulated merit. It isn't certain! Some meditators come along later but progress quicker. How does this work? It's because of the cycle of *saṁsāra*[34]. Some are around for a long time but still haven't achieved many results. Whether someone succeeds sooner or later is dependent on their accumulated level of *pārami*. The ones who find success quickly put forth effort and accumulated a lot of *pārami* in a previous life. Maybe someone had enough *pārami* to be ordained in the time of the Buddha, but only enough to ordain at an old age which was too late to allow them to see the Dhamma. It really depends on the merit we have accumulated. Some monks have been practicing ever since they were a novice and still haven't got any results. They may even reach old age and still not see any results. This doesn't just apply to one individual monk, it affects everyone.

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[34] *Saṁsāra*: literally 'perpetual wandering.' Referring to the continuous process of birth and death.

DIFFERENT PLACES, VARIOUS METHODS, SAME TEACHINGS

hough we might have ordained in previous lives, maybe we still haven’t seen any results. This will depend on our accumulated merit, our *pārami*. It follows us. But whatever our situation is, we have the opportunity now to practice the Dhamma in the way of our teachers, the Kruba Ajahns. We have to stick to these principles. Don’t deviate from them or let them go. If we have let these principles go, we are off the path. If we have let them go, we have let go of the very thing that will help our progress. Many different monasteries teach this correct path, the way of contemplation. Certain Mae Chii[35] meditation centres also teach the same path: keeping *sati* watching over the body, watching over feelings, the mind, and mind objects, right within the *satipaṭṭhāna*[36]. If we watch right here, probe at this, we can understand and see the Dhamma.

Keep practicing along the principles of the Vinaya (monastic disciplinary code). These principles give us a means for correctness, uprightness and grandeur. It is the way to make our conduct beautiful. This is the way that will lead us to further progress.

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[35] Mae Chii: eight-precept white-clothed nun, common in Thailand.
[36] *Satipaṭṭhāna*: the four Foundations of Mindfulness, which, are: Contemplation of Body, Feeling, Mind and Mind Objects.

In a certain lineage the teacher will teach the way to develop things like *manomayiddhi* (creating mind-made bodies) with the power of mind and other psychic powers. They are real but exist within the field of *abhiññās*[37]. Practicing for psychic powers requires the development of *abhiññā*, for which we need a high level of *pārami*. But these Theras (Elders) only use these psychic powers to attract people to the Buddhist teachings, to pull them in by getting them interested, because we all like psychic powers, special kinds of mental tricks. They really pull us in and attract us.

First they get people's attention with their psychic powers. Then they explain that if we practice the way they teach, that we can develop these powers too. That's it, hooked! "I want to practice this way!"

They explain that if we want these powers, first we have to develop *sīla*, then we will see them. But when we try it they still don't come. These powers still haven't come about. So the teacher says it's because we don't have *vipassanā*. We need to develop *vipassanā*. Then we quickly notice, "Hey, I still haven't developed these psychic powers." So the teacher tells us that we have no *samādhi*. Then if we still haven't developed them, they tell us it's because our *sīla* isn't pure enough. So it's back to the start.

It all comes back to the basic principles of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Just like that! The way of attracting people through psychic powers is

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[37] *Abhiññā*: the six Higher Powers, or Supernormal Knowledges, consisting of five mundane powers attainable through the utmost perfection in mental concentration and one supermundane power attainable through penetrating insight:1. Supernormal powers 2. Divine ear 3. Penetration of the mind of others 4. Divine eye 5. Remembrance of former existences 6. Extinction of all mental defilements (supermundane).

just a different way to teach the same principles by using a means of getting people interested first and developing faith.

Some monks, though they may have *abhiññās* themselves, don't speak of it because they are inclined to teach by way of reason and investigation using *paññā*. Luang Pu Chah exemplified this style, teaching and advising with his own knowledge and experience of the practice, knowing the ways of progress and the ways of decline.

There was once a monk who stared at the sun as his *kasiṇa*[38] meditation object until he gained supernormal psychic powers like being able to read others' minds. But later he fell into delusion. He just lost the way. He could sit all night without nodding off, but he still fell into delusion. He later disrobed and went crazy. Luang Pu Chah wouldn't allow his monks to get into this sort of playing with *kasiṇas*. Though there were a few monks who still did use the sun as their *kasiṇa* meditation object despite Luang Pu Chah's objection, in general he wouldn't have any of this. Because he knew the correct and important aspects of the practice, Luang Pu Chah would try to pull them back onto the right path. He knew that most of the monks that get into *kasiṇas* fall into the same trap. They stray from the path.

With the training of the mind, sometimes we find it really difficult, we find that it's too hard and burdensome. If we haven't got enough *pārami*, yes, it is difficult and burdensome. If we have enough *pārami* though, it isn't hard at all. Whichever way it is, we need to patiently keep at it following the principles of practice laid out by our Elders

[38] *kasiṇa:* a purely external device used to produce and develop concentration of mind and attain the four absorptions.

such as Luang Pu Mun and Luang Pu Chah. These great monks and many others traveled on the path that leads all the way to *arahantship*. This path is based on making the mind peaceful, then moving into investigation within the framework of the body; or else using the investigation of the body to make the mind peaceful.

Some monks go straight to looking at the mind. They skip over and don't investigate the body at all. They just watch mental feelings and thoughts. If we really watch over the mind with *sati*, it has to stop thinking. We need to be able to stop it. If we really focus and watch right at the mind the thinking has to stop. Watching with unwavering attention, focused on the mind, we see the thoughts arise and pass, arise and pass. Eventually they will stop.

This is the *sati* that watches over the mind. We see that this mind is only the mind. The thinking ceases. We have to follow it—follow it with knowing. If we try this and the thinking doesn't stop, this means that our *sati* is weak. If we try to keep using this weak *sati* to investigate in this way, sooner or later we are going to run out of energy. All of our strength will be depleted and we may become lost in our thinking. There are so many monks who have encountered and experienced this. They haven't entered upon a path which lays out the principles of practice in their essence.

The correct way to develop the mind in meditation is to not let it get attached to liking or disliking. To do this Luang Pu Chah had us contemplate the body. This is important because it is the way to bring the mind to peace. When we talk about fixing attention on the breath, this means being mindful of the body in the body. Once the mind finds peace it becomes radiant and luminous and our contemplation

will be able to separate the mind and the body. The “Knowing” or the “Knower” will become prominent in our awareness at that point. The “Knower” will see any hindrances that are arising in the mind and will know where they are and on what level they are arising. It will also know the level of radiance of the mind. This is something we can observe.

Once this state of radiant awareness has manifested clearly in “the mind that knows,” then we will know that we are following the correct path of practice and the right way to proceed. Our own experience will match that of all the teachers as we have heard and studied. We will know at what level the mind is at and what stage our practice has reached, because the teachers have pointed out each stage as we are experiencing it.

THE EXPERIENCE OF APPANĀ SAMĀDHI

If we are going to gain expertise in investigation, we have to do it often. Really develop it a lot, do it a lot.

At the start we will probably experience fatigue, exhaustion and difficulties because we have to poke at and look right into all our moods, into all the feelings and thoughts that come up—the manifestations of liking and disliking. But we have to keep investigating continuously and consistently so that the mind doesn't go chasing after all these moods.

When we start to be able to follow and guard the mind, we are in the present and our *samādhi* begins to progress a lot more smoothly. The mind will be able to move to the level of *khaṇika samādhi*. But whenever we walk *caṅkama* or sit in meditation, this *samādhi* will go deeper. Fixing attention on the *kammaṭṭhāna* that we are using and are skilled in, the mind can move to *upacāra samādhi*.

Whether we are walking or sitting, whichever we find the most effective, by taking up the method we have gained proficiency in, entering *upacāra samādhi* will be quick and easy because we are already skilled. But when we come out of *upacāra samādhi* and encounter the various emotions and moods, the mind will still get involved in them. So we have to keep our *sati* up with them. If we

continually investigate the body, feelings, mind and mind objects, our *sati* will become firmer and our *samādhi* will become stronger.

Being able to develop the mind to enter *appanā samādhi* depends on our accumulated merit. Some monks don't experience it until after many years, some experience it after five or six years, and some in only one year.

Appanā samādhi…this is where *samādhi* is at its most calm and cool. *Vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti* (rapture), *sukha* (joy) and *ekaggatā*[39] all converge into one. It's like the pendulum of a grandfather clock that usually swings from right to left, but has stopped still in the middle.

At this point, even if we want to think, we can't. The mind is so still that there is no movement of thought whatsoever, no proliferation. There is only the knowing. After the mind has been calm and still for a duration depending on its own strength, it will withdraw from that state. We then have to move into investigation. We take up this body, our physical form, and investigate to see it with total clarity in the light of *anicca, dukkha, anattā* .

From here our investigation will move along by itself, as if on automatic. It has a momentum of its own. We investigate to see ourselves as merely elements. We can investigate our own hair. Suppose our hair falls out, we will realise that it isn't ours or a self. This will give rise to the understanding that there isn't a permanent entity or a self. Wisdom will arise. The mind and body will separate

[39] *Ekaggatā* : unified consciousness; singleness of mind.

and be seen clearly as different from each other. The mind and feelings will also separate. We will see clearly…true understanding.

But if we don't yet have the ability to enter *appanā samādhi* and our investigation isn't at the point where we can see this separation clearly, then we must rely on continually developing whatever level of *samādhi* we have.

This whole process will lead to the maturing of the practice and the understanding of Dhamma. We maintain *khaṇika samādhi* when in a normal state going about our daily activity and then when we sit the mind will go straight into *upacāra samādhi*. In time, we will be able to remain in *upacāra samādhi* in all postures. When the mind proceeds deeper into its investigation of the body, feelings, mind and mind objects, it will incline towards *appanā samādhi*. The mind's strength progresses around itself like this.

Now the mind will be able to see sharply and clearly. Before we are fully skilled in entering *appanā samādhi*, it is possible to have some periods of the mind staying in *upacāra samādhi* for a whole month. The body and mind are light and at ease. There are still external sense impressions but they don't affect the heart because *samādhi* has separated them out due to its power. Effort and diligence in the practice now has a momentum of its own. The heart will always be wakeful and alert equipped with the *bojjhaṅgas*[40]. There is *pīti*, *sati*, and *samādhi*.

[40] *Bojjhaṅgas*: 'the 7 factors of enlightenment': mindfulness, investigation of Dhamma, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

If we make the effort to maintain *sati* continuously, mindfully keeping up with all the moods and emotions we experience and seeing the body as it truly is, our *samādhi* will gain stability and be kept smooth and even. Without having to do or control anything our meditation moves along smoothly by itself. The mind remains in the state of *upacāra samādhi*. This is the result of the continuous development of our practice, investigating until we understand and see clearly into the Dhamma, until there are no more doubts. This *samādhi* is firm within us. We don't need to try and control it or be overly cautious. It's at a good level, but not quite to the full extent. We have to keep proceeding down the Noble Eightfold Path[41]. We have to keep investigating, investigating just like we have been, practicing like we have been. Step by step, it will take the strength of the mind to a new level.

Some monks are skilled at making their minds peaceful by using the *parikamma*s *"buddho,"* "*dhammo,*" "*sangho,*" or watching the breath until their mind reaches stillness. We have to keep up with our *kammaṭṭhāna* that we are experienced with in order to pass beyond our moods and emotions, overcoming all the hindrances. When we have various mental states of desire, aversion, drowsiness, restlessness, irritation and doubt, we have to train and adapt our *samādhi* to cross over and beyond those mental states. This is called focusing the mind. This is *bhāvanā*. This is *samādhi*. This will give us the foundation that supports the practice—the practice of *paññā*.

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[41] Noble Eightfold Path: the path of practice which upon completion brings the heart to enlightenment. The path consists of eight aspects further divided into the threefold training of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. The factors of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood represent the training in virtue and moral discipline; Right Effort, Right Mind-fulness and Right *Samādhi* represent the training of the mind; and finally Right View and

When we are proficient in all these levels of *samādhi—khaṇika*, *upacāra* and *appanā*—our investigation comes about quite easily. Whether we direct our contemplation to the body, to feelings, mind or mind objects, within no long time, maybe even in three or seven days, we will be able to see the Dhamma in all its clarity.

However, if we follow the path of *paññā* developing *samādhi*, we must keep investigating and letting go of the *kilesas* one by one, bit by bit, little by little. Because our *samādhi* isn't yet firm and stable, we have to rely on using *paññā* to develop these states of *samādhi*. This *samādhi* might not be as deep as in the way of *samādhi* developing *paññā*, but we still need it to support the contemplation.

Whoever follows the path of wisdom and contemplation will need to keep investigating with *paññā* until the strength of *samādhi* is gradually developed up through the levels of *khaṇika*, *upacāra* and *appanā*. The understanding of Dhamma will then arrive at full clarity. Ultimately, whoever develops *samādhi* needs to get to the level of *appanā*. If *samādhi* hasn't yet reached maturation it will be impossible to see the Dhamma clearly. Here, *paññā* and *samādhi* should be operating in balance and harmony with one another.

We can use either of the two ways of practice, *paññā* developing *samādhi* or *samādhi* developing *paññā*. Whichever way works, this is the way to progress along. The magga (path) of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

If we have a lot of work and duties, practicing *samādhi* and making the heart at one by using a meditation word or with the breath may be difficult. Knowing that it is hard, we need to firmly set *sati* to the task

of guarding over the heart and bringing it to calm. If we are going to practice *samādhi* in this way, we need to keep *"buddho"* constantly with us. Whether we are standing, sitting, walking, lying down, or whatever else we might be doing, we have to keep the meditation word *"buddho"* always in the heart.

If we are eating, we have to be thinking of *"buddho"* so that the heart is at one with it. If the heart is always with *"buddho"* until it is the only object within, we can then prevent all the impressions from outside from entering and disturbing it.

But if we are keeping an eye on the mind—that is to say, recognising our thinking, proliferation and restlessness—though there is some level of "knowing," the *sati* is too weak to be able to keep the mind in check. So we must bring up "*buddho.*" Every time that there are thoughts arising, we mentally repeat *"buddho"* until all our thinking is reduced and *"buddho"* is there in its place.

WHEN THE PRACTICE DECLINES

For those who have taken up the monastic life, the Kruba Ajahns in the tradition of Luang Pu Mun have always stressed developing *samādhi*. When we have no involvement in work projects, then there is opportunity in the forest and mountains to develop the heart to deeper levels.

But if we do have a lot of responsibilities and duties then we really have to watch over the heart with wisdom. Sometimes we have to rely on contemplation first to bring the heart to calm, but sometimes just by focusing on our *parikamma* or on the breath it becomes calm and quiet. Whatever the case is, these two methods can be used accordingly or alternated at different times.

When the heart has experienced calm and withdrawn from it, we need to get in and investigate this mass of physical form that is the body. We keep at this until there is clarity in our understanding. This is called *vipassanā*. We use the calm to focus our attention firmly within the body for the arising of *paññā*.

One kind of *paññā* comes from listening and hearing, another from reflecting and pondering. But the *paññā* that arises from calm is the *paññā* of *bhāvanā*. This is *vipassanā* that will give rise to clarity in our heart.

We may sometimes experience enormous amounts of *pīti*, for a month, maybe even many months. If we think that this is *vipassanā* we lose ourselves to *vipassanūpakilesa*[42]. We aren't interested in taking up the investigation into the body and our own moods and emotions.

We may think we don't need to investigate the elements of earth, air, water and fire anymore. We feel there is no need, that just watching the mind is sufficient. Because when we start to investigate the body it just switches and wants to drop into calm. This makes us think we only need to investigate the mind and that it's not necessary at all to investigate the body. Yet Luang Pu Chah would always teach to get in and investigate the body.

But to just keep investigating the mind won't last very long and our energy will be depleted. All the calm and peace we experienced will disappear, the same as someone who has never done any meditation at all. All the proliferation takes over again in a flooding wave, liking and disliking take over again. This is common.

We might think that our meditation has fallen apart. But if we rise up with a resolution to put forth effort in every posture—standing, walking, sitting and lying down—to focus our *sati* continuously and firmly as we had done before, putting down our various burdens and duties, this should make the calm of our mind come again anew. And this calm will be deeper than before, and our *paññā* will go deeper than before. This is the natural way of progress.

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[42] *Vipassanūpakilesa*: 'imperfections of insight': luminosity (*obhāsa*), knowledge *(ñāṇa*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), happiness (sukha), resolution (*adhimokkha*), exertion (*paggāha),* established mindfulness (*upaññhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā)* and delight (*nikanti*).

This is the natural progress of developing *samādhi*. Initially it isn't that firm, it's not so full, so we must go back and reapply ourselves to the practice until the mind is totally solid, without room to fall back and without flaw. Our formal practice will evolve to a new stage of maturity.

Therefore let us all have patient endurance and persistence in our practice. Let us always work towards developing the five spiritual powers to perfection—these five powers of *saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy), *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—until they are sources of power for the mind. The *paramī* from this is of the highest kind and will lead us to understand the Dhamma.

Putting forth effort in *samādhi* is something of the utmost importance. We have to try to steadily apply our minds so as to experience deep calm and peace, to surpass all the moods and emotions, all the *vedanā*. If we can cross over and rise above the barrier of *vedanā*, sometimes we will be able to see it as a totally separate phenomena from the mind. Whenever *vedanā* arises within our body we focus in and investigate it, so that the mind pulls away and disassociates from it.

This struggle with *vedanā* is really an exercise of development in line with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Therefore every single one of us that have come here with the firm resolve to practice needs to put forth effort and have patient endurance. If we can keep this practice constant, this will make our minds advance and progress, giving us encouragement to keep practicing further.

ALL RŪPA AND NĀMA ARE NOT-SELF

The Buddha always taught that every aspect of *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* has the characteristic of arising, remaining, and then passing away. Its nature is to stay for a while and then cease.

All *rūpa* and *nāma* are only conditions that arise, remain, and then pass away. Yet because our *sati* can't keep up and recognise this, we go grasping at the *rūpa*, believing it to be ours. We grasp at the *vedanā* as ours, all the feelings that arise. We grasp at *saññā*, all our memories and perceptions that seem to be our own. We grasp and take as self the *saṅkhāras*, the various thought formations. We grasp as ours the *viññāṇa*, the various sense impressions. These all occur so quickly that our *sati* can't keep up and understand that none of these are actually ours. In reality they all have the characteristic to simply arise and pass away.

All the pleasant feelings that we have previously experienced, where are they now? If they were ours, where are they now? Those pleasant feelings arose, persisted, and then passed away. All the painful feelings that we have ever experienced likewise only arose, persisted, and then passed away. All the feelings have passed. All the *sukha* and *dukkha vedanā* that we experience in the present only ever arises and passes away in the present.

But at this point, maybe *saññā* will arise and we remember and identify with it. This person said this and it pleased us, this person just complained, this other person speaks and acts like this. It's all just *saññā*. Whenever someone speaks, *saññā will* latch on and remember it. But this *saññā* of speech isn't anyone's self. In truth it's *anicca, dukkha, anattā* . But if our *sati* doesn't know this we will just go grasping and taking on all this *saññā* as ours. Then we will go on proliferating about it. It's simply the nature of *saṅkhāras*, whether good or bad, to proliferate. Along with all this is *viññāṇa*,constantly arising and ceasing.

If we pull apart the whole process, there are just piles of *rūpa*or piles of *nāma*. For example *viññāṇa*, we sense that 'we' see, but this sen*sati*on of seeing, if there is no light will it occur? What if we're blind? Or if we're deaf, will we hear the sounds around us? Will we experience them? If we are deaf but there is a sound there, we aren't going to hear it. The nerves in the ear don't even work. So this thinking that we are hearing, it comes from a functioning nerve system in the ear. When the sound comes into contact with the nerve system, this gives rise to hearing.

So the sen*sati*on of hearing, the mind knows that it's hearing a sound but our wisdom can't keep up with it. The mind grasps onto the notion that 'we' are hearing, that 'we' are the ones that hear. When the sensation of hearing occurs and we still identify with it as ourselves, it will have liking and disliking arising along with it. This further perpetuates delusion. This is *avijjā*[43], blinding darkness.

[43] *Avijjā*: 'ignorance,' synonymous with delusion (*moha*). It is the primary root of all evil and suffering in the world, preventing beings from seeing the true nature of all things, as impermanent, suffering and not self, thus binding them to the ever-turning cycle of birth and death.

The resulting delusion conditions *kamma*[44] formations and feeds the process that gives rise to *taṇhā* (craving) and *kilesas*. This is the cause of all suffering. *Paṭiccasamuppāda*[45], happening right in the present moment. Arising in a single mind moment, this is the process that leads on to suffering. This is becoming and birth occurring in every single mind moment.

[44] *Kamma*: (Sanskrit = karma): literally, 'action.' Intentional actions of body, speech and mind which can be wholesome or unwholesome and have corresponding favourable or unfavourable results.

[45] *Paṭiccasamuppāda*: 'Dependent Origination'; the Buddha's doctrine of conditionality which explains the natural process of ignorance leading to suffering and how through the abandoning of ignorance all suffering comes to an end.

THE NOBLE ONES RISE OUT OF DELUSION

The Buddha laid down the path for the way out of the *vaṭṭa* (round of rebirths), which in essence is *kilesas*, kamma and *vipāka* (kamma result). The cycle of *kilesas*, the cycle of kamma, the cycle of *vipāka*: the way out of these cycles is through the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

Sīla, as we probably understand already, is restraining our bodily and verbal actions so that they are blameless. *Samādhi* is making our minds firm and steady. This firmness and stability of the mind comes from focusing our *sati* steadfastly. Knowing the in and out breath is one method, called *ānāpānasati*. This is the foundation, the crown pinnacle of all *kammaṭṭhāna*.

When we have *sati* knowing the in and out breaths or we fix our attention solely on one specific point in the body, the heart will converge and our *sati* gathers together. *Vitakka* picks up the object of the breath, meaning it focuses on its one specific object. *Vicāra* keeps and holds the object so that it doesn't wander anywhere. *Vicāra* is wholly with the *kammaṭṭhāna* that we are using until *pīti* and *sukha* arises, bringing about a state of inner fullness.

The mind that is still, not moving around here or there anymore, this is the *ekaggatā* citta. It is the mind in one unified state. Calm and

stillness arise and the mind reaches a level of *samādhi*. The mind will be calm and firm.

When *pīti* arises, *vitakka* and *vicāra* seem too coarse. Then when *sukha* arises, *pīti* also seems coarse. Finally, when *sukha* seems too coarse, the mind gathers into unified stillness and all the factors—*pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā* —merge together and are contained in that stillness. The mind converges into a state of *samādhi* that is firm.

The mind experiences ascending levels of depth and refinement. *Pīti* manifests clearly, then follows *sukha*, until finally the mind rests and abides in a state of equanimity. This is the practice of *samādhi* with its various levels from coarse to refined.

When the mind is in this unified state of *samādhi* for a long time, we may fall into delusion and think that this is *nibbāna*, that we have seen the Dhamma. "The Dhamma is like this, *nibbāna* is like this." Though this state arises out of *samādhi*, out of firm and solid calm, this still isn't *nibbāna*. If this is *'nibbāna'*, it is a *"nibbāna"* that only comes about due to a temporary suppression. The *kilesas* of *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (anger) and *moha* (delusion) are still there.

If we get to this state, maybe we will fall into delusion and we will get caught into misunderstanding. We might think that we've seen the Dhamma, that we know the Dhamma. But this view is conditioned by the presence of our *samādhi*. This kind of thing occurs very often in meditators when their *samādhi* is firm and strong.

But of course this *samādhi* is still important. If the mind didn't attach to *samādhi*, it would just go and attach to forms, sounds, smells, tastes,

bodily sensations and mental objects instead. We need to have *sati* fastening and focusing the mind into stillness first. We need to learn to become skilled in the area of *samādhi* until we can experience it clearly.

Sometimes we might think that developing *samādhi* isn't important. It's like someone thinking, "I've experienced the stage of *pīti* and now I'm set to move into *sukha*." However, maybe it's only *pīti* at the level of *khaṇika samādhi,* but we think that it's *pīti* at the level of *upacāra samādhi,* or the *pīti* of *appanā samādhi* or second *jhāna*[46]. We can easily make this mistake. We can even think that next is the third *jhāna*. This happens a lot if we don't know what is real and true and have no experience in this area.

It's easy to get caught into delusion about the levels of *samādhi*, because there is wanting and expectation there, or *taṇhā*. This makes us overestimate ourselves and feel assured that we have attained *jhāna*, or the paths and fruits of the practice. And so we have to use *sati* to reassess and review ourselves.

The Kruba Ajahns taught the way to overcome this delusion over attainments in our practice. If we think we have attained *jhāna*, they would tell us that this isn't certain, that it's not sure. If in the course of our practice we start to think, "Oh, I'm a *sotāpanna* already!" then they would emphasise that it's not a sure thing. Reconsider it in the light of *anicca*.

[46] *Jhāna*: various levels of meditative absorption

This is the way to gain *paññā*. We investigate to see the sabhava dhamma—that every state that arises is just *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* . These characteristics all apply together. Don't go grasping anything at all, it's just *upādāna*.

We practice to abandon "having" things or "being" anything at all. We don't practice to "get" or to "be" a *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi* or *arahant*. These are just conventions that refer to the mind of a practitioner who has reached a certain level, but that individual wouldn't attach to a perception of self based on that attainment. They wouldn't attach to the view that they are "a this" or "a that." They would understand these terms as just conventions.

In truth, these terms just indicate the progress towards *vimutti* (liberation), where we are beyond these conventions and able to escape and pass through all these things that bind us. Abandoning *sakkàyadiññhi* (personality view), *vicikicchā* (sceptical doubt), *sīlabbata parāmāsa* (attachment to precepts and practices)—this is the start, the preliminary stage.

The *samādhi* of *appanā samādhi* is strong, powerful and unified. If we really haven't experienced the heart at one, it's so hard to intellectually understand. We will just take someone else's description at face value.

At the stage of my own practice where I started to experience some *pīti*, I had the expectation that after I attained that *pīti*, *sukha* was coming up next. But on trying to enter into *sukha*, the power of mind was not sufficient to pass beyond *pīti* and couldn't make progress. Without even realising it, *sati* wasn't gathering anymore and was

gradually getting weaker. It had become so weak now that even *pīti* couldn't be accessed.

Why is this? Because we have abandoned the meditation word or abandoned watching the in and out breath. We have to earnestly resume our repetition of our meditation word. Get back in and redo it from the start: "*buddho*" anew, "*dhammo*" anew, "*sangho*" anew, investigate anew. In the course of our practice we have to come back and rebuild again on the same spot we started on.

We have to establish our *sati* anew. Rebuild. Do our practice anew. Pursue it constantly and continually until the heart can re-experience peace and calm and get past the moods and emotions again. Then we can be at peace.

In the course of my own practice, I experienced and passed through a lot of *pīti*, a lot of *sukha*. Ohhh, tremendous amounts of it, even up to the point where it lasted for a whole month. But even if it's like this, still we have to come back and go over the fundamentals of the practice back and forth.

We have to keep bringing up the level of the mind over and over again. With *vitakka* and *vicāra*, we may think that they are gone and we don't need to bother with them anymore. We think that we have passed beyond them, but sometimes we have to come back to *vitakka* and *vicāra*, back to the breath again. These are the coarser and also more refined levels of the mind that we have to go through in the practice.

With every step and with every stage, we can't throw away, but must constantly turn back to our basis, our foundation, the guiding path of our practice. Having *sati* and doing *bhāvanā*, we have to fix our minds on our chosen *kammaṭṭhāna* that we are skilled in. Here, when we are practicing and investigating—breaking apart the elements, breaking apart the *khandas*, breaking apart this form we now have—we need to pursue this until we see clearly. When there is clarity we will know and understand for ourselves.

At this point "the one that knows" doesn't claim that it is a *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anàgàmi*, or an *arahant*. There is only knowing. If the practice is really at this stage, we know what has been abandoned, and also what more needs to be done.

We know and see clearly, but we don't need to talk about it. The more we talk about it the more we are just bragging. We come to abandon everything, not to blemish the heart further. We are purifying the heart. Because in reality, when we have broken through these thick layers and have done the real practice, there isn't anyone here at all. Whatever *rūpa* or *nāma* there is, we will see it all as *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* .

So where is the *sotāpanna*? Where is it to be found? Is it in *rūpa* or *nāma*? Actually, it's only conventions of speech that label levels of attainment. It's the heart that knows *rūpa* or *nāma*, knows that they are impermanent. They are only *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*. The knowing that arises from this is the knowing that arises from *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, and then it is all let go of. The heart is poised and maintained in the present moment.

So we keep practicing, abandoning the *kilesas*, then move onto abandon greed and anger little by little until the burden is lighter. The insight and knowing will come clearly into our own heart. We will not need to label this as the stage of *sakadāgāmi*. When we abandon greed and anger, then we will know we have reached the stage of *anāgāmi*. Once all greed, hatred and delusion has been abandoned, then we will know we have reached the stage of *arahant*. This is the progression of someone who has traveled the Noble Eightfold Path, walking the way of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

Sometimes in the course of practice we will have the wrong view that we are at this level or that level. This is just mistaken *saññā*, simply foolish. It doesn't accord with the truth. We really have to be careful.

We may experience a calm so deep and profound that it seems to open up the truth, but the Buddha explained that this is just the *vipassanūpakilesa* arising. This is an obstacle to the practice and will create difficulties in the development of *vipassanā*.

When we sit meditation, it can happen that a lot of *pīti* arises, a lot of *sukha* arises, and we experience great peace and calm. Radiance and brightness seem to be all that is left. Maybe we will think that this is *magga-phala* (path and fruition). We have to be careful and have *sati* and *paññā* watching over our experience. Luang Pu Chah would always point out that it is *anicca*. It is only *anicca*. He taught not to be fooled by this.

We may think that our *samādhi* is so great to the point where we believe we have *jhāna* or are a *sotāpanna* or that we are even a *sakadāgāmi*. If this comes about there is obviously still a sense of self there. Luang

Pu Chah would say that it's uncertain, it's not permanent. And if we think that we are an *arahant*, this is uncertainty at the highest level. We have to have *sati* and *paññā* always so we don't fall into this delusion. This will stop others from being deluded about us as well, thinking that we are this or that.

Some people would come and ask Luang Pu Chah, "Are you an *arahant*?" But he would just answer that he wasn't anything. If the heart doesn't have anything, how can we "be" an *arahant*? If we are still anything, we will still have suffering there. If we think we are this or that, or that we are already a *sotāpanna*, some people may disagree or not believe us at all and this will make our *kilesas* arise, followed by *dukkha*. If we think we are an *arahant* we have an even bigger problem, because if people don't believe us it's really going to make us suffer. An *arahant* with suffering…how come an *arahant* is suffering!? How is this going to happen? How are they going to have anger or greed arising? This just shows that it is difficult to really know. This is something that is *paccataṁ veditabbo viññuhīti* —to be experienced individually by the wise.

The Kruba Ajahns whose hearts have attained to the final goal, the words and emotions they express are simply external modes of behaviour. *Kamma* is not being made. They may speak harshly, softly, timidly or what not, but it's just mere bodily and verbal expression. Free of *kilesas*, they explain, "It's not *kamma*, it's *kiriya* (mere action) without *upādāna*." This absence of *upādāna* is something hard to fathom. The mind is one thing, the mind objects another. They aren't the same.

Luang Pu Chah would give the comparison of a crazy person and the *arahant*. Sometimes we might look at them and think there is no difference. Luang Pu Chah said that this lunatic and the *arahant* might on the outside appear the same, but one is traveling on the lower road and the other has traveled on the highest of paths.

Therefore, in the course of our practice we need to always have *sati* and *paññā*. Whatever we come into contact with, we should know it as *anicca*. This will make our hearts wise, not wallowing in low-lying ignorance. When we practice like this we will understand clearly and be able to let go. When we see people who are acting out of delusion, we will understand the situation, that it's *anicca, dukkha, anattā* .

In the start our conviction comes from faith. We have belief and we have reverence. Though sometimes we have no *paññā*, no wisdom at all. Luang Pu Chah gave the example of when he was younger and he met a monk who he believed at first to be an *arahant*. That monk could act just like an *arahant*. He could let go of whatever it was, just like an *arahant*. After awhile Luang Pu Chah noticed that this monk's way of practice and behaviour had changed; he then saw the truth of the matter. "Ohhh, I was mistaken!" This gave rise to wisdom. In retrospect, these mistakes are normal in the course of practice. This is important to remember.

Whether a practitioner is living near or far from a Kruba Ajahn, above all else we have to keep close to the Buddha. "Close," meaning that we have to keep close to the reality of *anicca*. *Anicca* has to be embedded within our hearts always. With *anicca* there right in our hearts, this supports and helps sustain us whenever any kinds of thoughts or feelings come up, good or bad. Sometimes we don't like a

certain person but another person we like a lot. Well, it's *anicca*. A certain kind of food that we find delicious, this again is *anicca*. If we eat it all the time, pretty soon we are going to get bored of it. This is just the nature of these things—it's not certain. All the thoughts and feelings we experience, it's all *anicca*. If we are investigating like this it shows that we have *paññā*.

If we can't keep up with these thoughts and feelings, we will go grasping at the five *khandas*. This is *upādāna* and gives rise to all the suffering in our hearts.

THE PAÑÑĀ THAT ARISES FROM BHĀVANĀ

For a practitioner, *samādhi* is important. Sometimes we might think, "I've been practicing for a while now, *samādhi* isn't important. I don't really need it. I'll just develop *paññā*. I only need *paññā* to finally reach the highest goal." But if we only try to develop *paññā*, in the end we will be without it.

The Buddha taught *samādhi paribhāvita paññā mahapphala hoti mahānisaṁsa*—the benefit of *samādhi* is that it is the direct cause for the arising of *paññā*. If *samādhi* isn't firm and stable, the *paññā* of a deep and profound nature won't arise in full clarity.

Though *paññā* may arise from listening and hearing, *sutamayapaññā*, or from intellectualising and thinking, *cintāmayapaññā*, *bhāvanāma*ya*paññā* still hasn't arisen. *Bhāvanāma*ya*paññā* is the *paññā* that comes about through our practice, from our *bhāvanā* of making the mind quiet. True *paññā* can only arise from a heart which is still and serene. When we support and aid our mind, by making it peaceful, the Dhamma may naturally arise for us to see and investigate. This gives rise to *paññā*.

If we have tendencies to be angry or to be moody at certain people, or have things that we are afraid of, they will fall away. If we look at these tendencies and investigate them, we will be able to let go of

them. In the periods we are investigating like this, we have to rely on *samādhi* as our foothold and foundation. If there is no *samādhi*, the *paññā* that arises from *bhāvanā* can't come about. This is something that is assured.

Looking after our *sīla* well, will be a cause for the arising of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* that is developed well will be a cause for the arising of *paññā*. And the *paññā* that is developed well will give rise to *vimutti*. This is the freedom from *upādāna*, grasping at all the various mental states which is the cause of all suffering.

Luang Pu Chah taught us to see things in the light of *paññā*. This means to investigate in the present, to abandon *upādāna* in the present, to abandon all wrong views in the present. This gives us right view in the present. The heart won't have any *dukkha*, only freedom and emptiness. The abandoning of greed, hatred and delusion gives rise to this emptiness. Only the pure, radiant heart remains.

Practitioners, having gained experience, may grasp at some aspects of their practice and take them to be *magga* or *phala*. But what is important here is to maintain the investigation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* within the heart. Whatever we feel about anything, it's never certain or lasting. Leave it aside.

When we hear or listen to anything, we must have *sati* and *paññā*. Consider it deeply but don't yet believe it. Keep practicing until the results are seen. This is the way of the wise, like the Venerable Sariputta, chief disciple of the Buddha, endowed with great *sati* and *paññā*.

CALM IS IMPERMANENT

Within the practice of *bhāvanā*, we have to look at the heart and see how we are feeling and reacting. Is there liking? Is there disliking? If we don't get what we wish or want, how do we feel? This is where we need to investigate. When we contemplate these mental movements, Luang Pu Chah said that this is the path. But if we are going to abandon all these mental states and be able to investigate this liking and disliking, the heart has to be at calm first. I can't stress this enough—it has to be at peace.

Whatever object of meditation we are using—whether it be *"buddho,"* "*dhammo,*" "*sangho,*" *kesā*, *lomā*, *nakhā*, *dantā*, *taco*—we have to keep that object with us at all times. If we don't, useless thinking will overrun us. The mind will just proliferate as it pleases. *Avijjā* is the condition for the arising of *saṅkhāras*. When we have these *saṅkhāras* and we don't do any *bhāvanā*, everything is difficult. These *saṅkhāras* will be reckoned as "self" or belonging to "self." They become "mine." If we practice using the *parikamma "buddho,"* then we have to keep recollecting *"buddho"* continuously. We must keep our *"buddho"* going always. Some of the great Theras taught to repeat *"buddho"* without a space in-between. If they were sitting, then, *"buddhobuddhobuddhobuddho,"* keeping only this in mind, every day for great lengths of time.

We need to do this to gain calm and stability within the heart. When the heart experiences quiet and still, it's so dazzling. This is the amazement that comes from the Dhamma. The body is light and the heart is tranquil, open and at ease, free and empty of everything. The impressions that have heaped up on the heart, about this and that, this person, that person, they are only just affairs of a self, being, person, me, us, you.

But if the heart is calm, if it's empty already, investigate right at that point. We'll see that there is no self, no being, no person, no me, no us, no you. Go right into it there. This is the heart that is emptiness. It can let go of everything. If we're going to let go to this level, how are we going to do it? We have to practice *bhāvanā*.

Sometimes practitioners might not even see any progress for a whole year, it just stays the same. But we have to be patient. Even if it seems to be declining, don't go thinking that keeping our meditation object isn't important. Though it's true that sometimes when our practice is good, we barely need the meditation object. As we sit down and are preparing to cross our legs, we're already in a state of calm. The mind straight away plummets into stillness.

We only watch the breath for a short moment and, in a flash, the mind falls into calm. We may even think it will always be like this, that it will always be still. If we have enough *pārami*, it can be like this. But if our *pārami* still isn't full, the calm that we have experienced will start to fall and pull away. It falls away until it seems like we have never done any practice at all. It has just disappeared. The mind is confused and scattered like it was before. We don't see the danger,

the danger of all the sights, tastes, sounds, smells and bodily sensations. All the pleasure associated with them comes back again.

We've got to start anew, to get into our meditation object again. Continuously we work to raise the mind with our meditation object. Raise the mind until it's calm again. Until there is *pīti*. Until there is *sukha*. Until the mind is calm and quiet. We have to rely on the meditation object as our refuge to help us. I can't stress how important using a meditation object is. It makes the heart still and quiet. And when this calm comes about, what are we going to do? Investigate. Investigate continuously, seeing *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* all throughout the body.

NIBBĀNA IS THE HIGHEST HAPPINESS

Luang Pu Chah would emphasise that we have to get out and walk *caṅkama*, sit meditation, recollect and investigate *kesā*, *lomā*, *nakhā*, *dantā*, *taco*. This is what will make us happy and content. If we don't get in and investigate, what will our lives be like? Distressed. Why is that? When liking arises, all different sorts of substances flood the body, like hormones rushing up and overflowing the brain. It influences our behaviour. This is the natural way of the world and of our physical bodies. We have to fight these natural tendencies. Rise above them. Keep watching over them by investigating always. The heart then will be at peace.

I ask that everyone be intent, intent on the practice of *asubha kammaṭṭhāna*. If someone has the tendency of leaning towards *paññā*, probe, question, inquire, and find the cause and effect. This can make the mind quiet and drop into calm. Use your *sati*. Use your *paññā*.

Look inside the body and see it as merely elements. See it as *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* . Make it peaceful. Look at all the moods, emotions and feelings of the body and of the mind. Whether *suk ha* or *dukkha*, they're all *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* .

Any sleepiness that arises, see it as Dhamma. When it is there it has to pass away. It doesn't belong to anyone or have any abiding self.

This is Dhamma. Whatever arises, thoroughly investigate it and frequently examine it. Diligently train and practice a lot.

The *sīla* that is kept well will be the cause for the arising of *samādhi*. The good fruits from our development of *samādhi* will be the cause for the arising of *paññā*. And the *paññā* we have developed well will give rise to the knowledge of release. This is the practice developed step by step.

So the practice of *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā* is the way that will lead us out of all *dukkha*. *Paññā* will arise out of *bhāvanā* and will lead to peace in the heart. If our *dāna* still isn't well established, our *sīla* isn't perfect, and our *samādhi* isn't firm, our *paññā* won't come about. If we think, "Hey, I've done so much *samādhi* practice, why haven't I seen any results?" We've got to take a look at ourselves. How is our *sīla*? Are we restrained in bodily and verbal actions? When we have this base well-established, we then have to train the mind.

The Kruba Ajahns taught to stick with our *kammaṭṭhāna*. Look at that! They didn't teach anything extravagant. They taught, "Stick with '*buddho.*'" But when we use "*buddho,*" we don't stay with it. We're only with it for a moment and then the mind takes off. So we think, "Oh, '*buddho'* doesn't suit my character." This is because we aren't really staying with it. Naturally it creates all sorts of doubts. "This *kammaṭṭhāna* doesn't suit me. Maybe this isn't the path at all. I haven't even experienced any calm yet. I think I'll try something else."

We can switch to another *kammaṭṭhāna*, but we have to use something that will make the mind quiet. Like frequently recollecting death—contemplate it a lot. When we come into the world we also bring

along old age, sickness and death. We all have to die. No one can escape it. Constantly contemplate *maraṇānussati*. Thinking about all those big, tall skyscrapers full of busy people these days…are any of them aware that they will die? Nobody is thinking about it! Our lives have to end with death. Nothing is certain. We all have to die.

This isn't just something that happens to other people. When a close relative or friend passes away, then we should see it with a wise sadness. This is *paññā*. But it's not the same as one who is cold-hearted and feels nothing. It's not that once we abandon *upādāna*, there is nothing left at all and the mind becomes dried up and cold to experiences.

Nibbāna isn't like that. *Nibbāna* by definition must be the highest, most exalted state. How is it that *nibbāna* is the highest happiness? *Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ vadanti buddha—nibbāna* is the supreme Dhamma, say all the Buddhas. A happiness above all others. It's a happiness that has not a drop of suffering mixed in with it at all, and it won't decline and fade back into a state of suffering. It's the only permanent happiness. Would you like that? It's something that is truly permanent and lasting. A happiness that never changes.

But this happiness has no owner. We could say that we experience this happiness, yet we don't attach or identify with it as our own. It isn't happiness like on the *lokiya* (worldly) level; it's *lokuttara* (world transcendent). It's *nirāmisasukha*—it's a happiness independent of material things or sensual desires. It's a happiness that doesn't change. It's *amata*, undying, deathless.

And this is the taste of the Dhamma, supreme over all other tastes.



All the great teachers, from the Supreme Buddha down to the arahant disciples of today, all their teachings are simply to get us to let go of our clinging to the five khandas*...just this much.*

Venerable Ajahn Anan Akiñcano trained for many years under the guidance of the renowned meditation master, Venerable Ajahn Chah. After vigorous meditation practice, Ajahn Anan set off into the forests and jungles to deepen his meditation practice. In 1978, he was offered land to establish a forest monastery, Wat Marp Jan, where he now resides as the abbot. Ajahn Anan is today considered one of the most prominent teachers in the Thai forest tradition. Ajahn Anan has a gift of teaching on many different levels from everyday life issues to the highest of Dhammas.

If in the past we saw this body as attractive, its outer appearance as beautiful, then the heart wasn't radiant. It was engulfed in darkness and overrun with kilesas. But if we see the body as something not beautiful, then the heart becomes beautiful. It becomes bright and luminous because it sees the truth. It's as if the heart flips over and experiences true peace. It becomes calm and still

Wat Marp Jan
www.watmarpjan.org